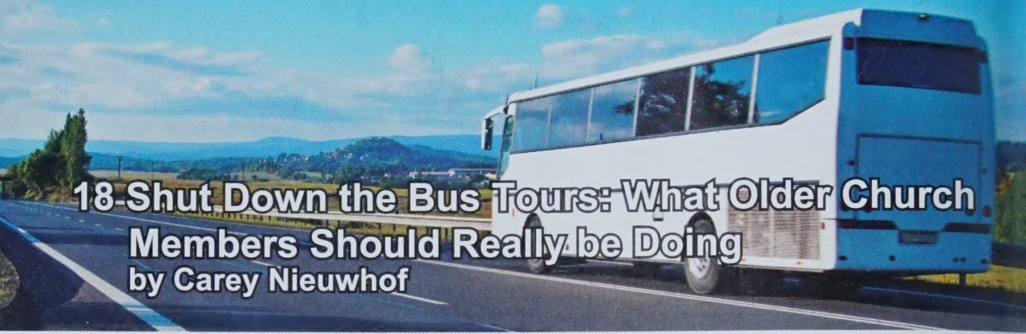
Glad Tidings

January/February 2017

Grand River, ON



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by Carey Nieuwhof

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Editorial

For a better ending, you need to start with a good beginning! Beginnings—the start of a new year. The time of resolutions. The time to start over. Even when I don't make resolutions, there is a little voice in my head that says, this year will be different. This year, I will try harder and do better. This year will be the year.

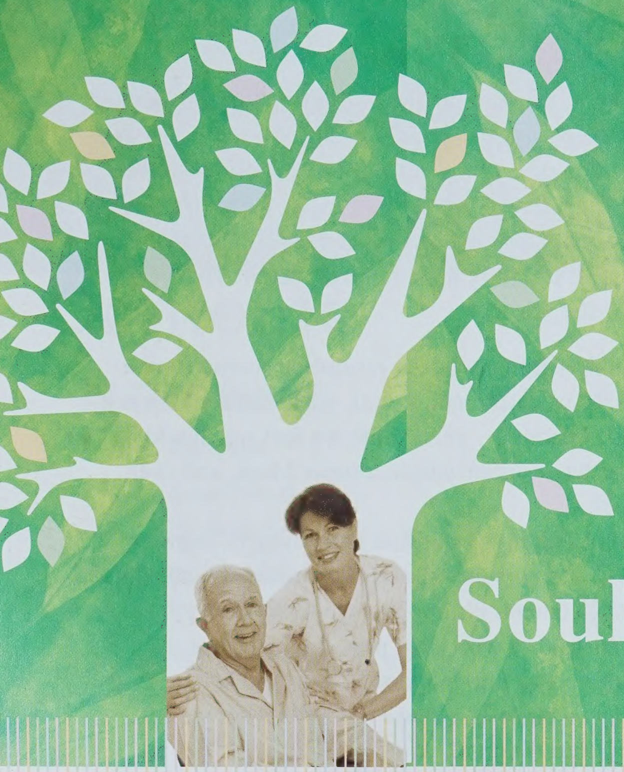
I think that many of our resolutions come from a place of discontent. I think we believe we are not good enough…yet. I think we feel we should be better looking, more fit, better at organization, a super Mom, and even more Holy.

I wonder what God thinks about all our fuss and worry to improve ourselves. I do think that God wants us to be our best self, but I also think God wants us to rest and be content. Philippians 4:6–7 says,

> "Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life." (The Message)

God did not choose us because we are perfect. God's love is not determined by how good we are at working out, spending time with family, eating healthy food, or even serving the marginalized, giving to the Church, or worshipping. God just loves us regardless. We all know it, but it bears repeating, there is nothing we can do that will separate us from the love of God. (If you haven't read it in a while, take a moment to read Romans 8:31–39.)

This year, let your beginning, begin with God. Spend time in prayer. Know that you are loved. Be content in your life. Give your worries to God. It doesn't mean that it is wrong to change or make resolutions, but know that fail or succeed, God's love is constant. Happy New Year!



Soul-Tending

by Janet Stark

(Adapted by Colleen Wood from a workshop given at the WMS Fall Rally in Manotick, ON)

What is Soul-Tending? Soul-tending is caring for another soul by providing love, loyalty, and faith. This is the same thing as care and compassion, our two best words for describing pastoral and palliative care.

A family goes through a normal life cycle, and there is a progression of stages the family finds itself in. It is a circle in that when a baby is born it is vulnerable and helpless. Often too, when an elderly or ill person is approaching the end of life, they may also be vulnerable and helpless. This is what I will focus on in this article—caring for our older family members, who need some sort of health support to lead a quality life. This may remind you of the Biblical story of Ruth caring for Naomi. Also, when we think about family, remember that anyone who acts like family can be considered family. It can be a relative, friend, or neighbour.

I will talk about the caregiver in this article, as well. A caregiver is one who looks out for some of the needs of another. It can be someone who physically does the work of cooking, cleaning, or bathing, but it may also involve someone who arranges things, organizes care, provides emotional support or provides financial advice, and perhaps power of attorney and more.

Caregiving also includes companioning. Companioning is "being there." It is being, rather than doing, and walking with someone. Remember that we can provide care in many ways.

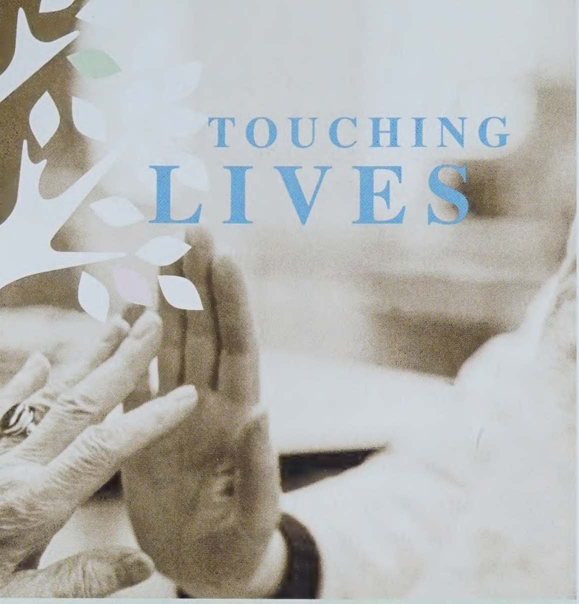
There is so much to consider when caregiving for family members. The October issue of Zoomer magazine, A Canadian magazine for baby boomers, has a couple of articles describing care options for aging seniors. I have picked out a couple of nuggets of information from these articles:

- More than 8 million Canadians provide informal care to loved ones.
- Family caregivers save the Canadian government $25 billion annually.
- France passed a "keep in touch" law in 2004 that mandates children check in with their aging parents.
- Average cost for a nursing home bed in Ontario is $126/day.
- Average cost for care at home is $42/day in Ontario.[1]

Not that long ago, perhaps two or three generations ago, it was very common for an elderly person to move in with a daughter or son and become an important part of that family. This often happened after a spouse had died or after the person has had an accident or illness. Grandma or Grandpa came to live with their children. This multi-generational home had many benefits.

It was also a time when families were not spread out across the country—or world—and many women did not work outside the home, at least full-time. Things have changed. In Canada, family members live much further apart and there are fewer adults, who are at home during the day. There are many models of families and I'm not making any judgments on their choices or needs. Years ago, a family could get by on one income, but often, that is not the case today.

So now we have a large number of older couples caring for each other, that is, elders caring for elders. These couples take turns leaning on each



TOUCHING LIVES

other through various trials, until it falls on one spouse to be the primary caregiver of the other. This can be right up to the point of the caregiver risking their own health for their partner. When my grandpa finally went in to hospital, at end of life, my grandma ended up going too. She was exhausted and needed respite. Sometimes these hospital admissions are called, “fail to cope.”

Obviously, what we want for elderly family members is to age well. The biggest determinants of health for aging well are lifestyle choices. We have control over this to some degree. Looking after body, mind, and spirit is key. Another important component is having support you can count on. Also, another influential piece on aging well is having the right attitude. It can add, on average, seven years to your life. As people of faith, we know that spiritual wellness and the right attitude are connected! Studies have shown that people who have strong faith practices have, on average, better health than those that don’t.

You have likely heard of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs.

Qualities of an Effective Caregiver:

- Warm, compassionate, empathetic
- Aware of feelings related to death and grief
- Aware of personal value and belief system
- Acceptance/non-judgment
- Promotion of dignity and respect
- Strong ability to listen & communicate
- Aware of different beliefs, culture and worldviews
- Ability to assess needs of patient/resident/client
- Ability to appropriately respond to needs

Brockville General Hospital Pastoral Care Education, Pastoral Care Training Progream, pg. 71

It explains that basic needs must be met before we can meet some of our other needs. First off, our basic physiological survival needs have to be met., i.e., the needs for the body. We need food, water, warmth, sleep, and pain and symptom management.

Secondly, we begin with some basic needs for the mind. We need to feel safe. For someone who is elderly, this might include thoughts such as, Do I feel safe here? Will I fall out of bed? Can I trust others? Do I trust my family, or my doctor?

Following these two needs, we can look at the feeling for love and belonging (Am I loved and needed? Do I feel warmth and affection? Am I connected to others and not lonely?), and esteem (Am I understood? Do I have self- confidence? Have I accomplished something with my life?).

Finally, we move onto the need of Self-Actualization, the spirit connection. Self-Actualization is not reached by all people as it really involves developing a strong belief system, and understanding how you fit into the world and that belief system.

Sometimes care requires difficult choices and these should always be informed choices. If someone is no longer able to meet their own needs in their current setting, other options will have to be explored. This is a time when families need to come together and consider the options. Here are a few options for elder care:

Home Care: There are lots of models for caring for our elderly in the home. We need to be resourceful and creative! The CCAC (Community Care Access Centre) has services that can assist. It is important to remember that quality of life should by determined be the person if they are mentally competent, even if a decision puts them at risk for falling, getting hurt, or even dying alone. It is okay if the elderly person chooses to share decision-making or may even defer decision-making to a family member, but this is at their own direction.

Assisted Living: Living in a senior's apartment provides some degree of independence, with the option of bringing in and paying for certain services as needed. This can be a good bridge option and is often much cheaper than a retirement home.

Institutionalization: Long-term care can provide the necessary 24-hour care.

Any change requires a 'settling in' time, usually about six weeks. There can be relocation stress. Remember, a person needs not only a warm bed and good food but also to feel safe, and not be afraid. Most settle in after a while, as long as the first three levels of Maslow's hierarchy of needs are met.

If you have someone in long-term care, you should read the Bill of Rights for Long Term Care and advocate for any disputes and discrepancies.[1]

Acknowledge and respect a person's losses when you are caring for them, especially during times of change. It is not just about the physical condition you are dealing with today; it is also about a series of losses that have led up to this point. This helps us in understanding the complex needs of a person with declining health.

Some elders experience sadness. Some live in daily fear. Some no longer feel valued or important. Consider how to foster a sense of hope, having at least something of value left on which to build spiritual strength. Look for signs that the person is feeling demoralized. This term means that the person has had their confidence or morale undermined. It is when one has lost their spirit. It can be expressed in sadness due to a loss of health, "I will never dance again after having my foot amputated." "I had just retired and planned to tour Europe, when my heart gave way." A person may eventually accept the loss and adjust to a new reality, but this may require support and possibly counselling. Having your plans change can lead

the more we care, the more

Loving God, We pray for friends and family members who are struggling with illness as they age. May we be a support to them.

We pray for those who are having to make changes in their life due to age, perhaps having to move to a senior's apartment or long-term care facilty. Be with them and grant them peace during this time or transition.

We pray for those who are experiencing the loss of a spouse. Comfort them.

We pray for caregivers. Help them to care for themselves as they also care for others.

In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

to demoralization—uncared for, this condition may lead to depression.

Depression is a condition that requires more support and intervention to prevent it from becoming a prolonged or chronic condition. The person may appear melancholy or flat. Things that would normally interest a person do not, and signs of depression point to a drop in general health. Depression is also very prevalent in the beginning stages of dementia.

Obviously, professional help might be needed for both of these conditions, but there are other things that can also assist:

- A person often remembers the past more clearly than the present. Take the time to talk about the good old days, and even chat about the hard times.
- Enjoy laughter—watch humourous shows together.
- Children and animals can help to lift spirits.
- Nature is also a great healer. Try to help the person get outside on a regularly basis.

Janet Stark has a pastoral care manual available online at: http://www.bgh-on.ca/upload/files/Pastoral%20Care%20Manual%202015.pdf

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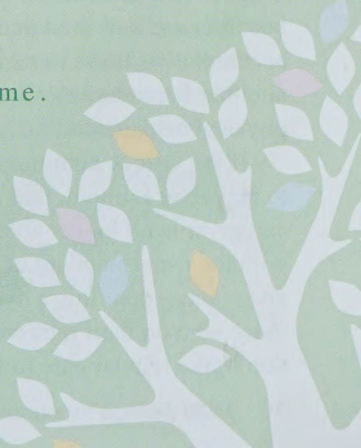
[1] The Long Term Care Bill of Rights can be found online at http://www.cleo.on.ca/en/publications/everyres

beautiful life becomes.

PSALM 51:10–12 (NRSV)

Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from your
presence, and do not take your holy
spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your
salvation, and sustain in me a willing
spirit.



COMPASSIONATE CAREGIVER

by Janet Stark

BUT RUTH REPLIED, "DON'T URGE ME TO LEAVE YOU OR TO TURN BACK FROM YOU. WHERE YOU GO I WILL GO, AND WHERE YOU STAY I WILL STAY. YOU PEOPLE WILL BE MY PEOPLE AND YOUR GOD MY GOD." RUTH 1:16

In the Biblical story of Ruth, we remember the love of Ruth for Naomi. Ruth was a caregiver for her mother-in-law, Naomi. At times, we also are called to become a compassionate caregiver to the elderly, ill, or family members. But as one who gives care, we must remember that we need ongoing care too.

Caregivers face many challenges and must be cared for. If not, the caregiver can experience compassion fatigue. This is when the caregiver becomes sad and tired due to the accumulative stress in caring for another. It can be emotional or physical exhaustion.

If the fatigue continues it will lead to caregiver burnout, that is, when the caregiver is no longer able to perform with the usual standard of empathy and compassion. It is a disorder of those who do their jobs well but who don't take regular care of themselves. It may be because they are reluctant to ask for help, or to hand off tasks to others. It can be a deep and slow drain.

To maintain wellness, the caregiver needs to be grounded in personal healthy lifestyle practices, and be very self-aware. Everyone needs to fill up their spirits regularly! And caregivers need someone to whom they can de-brief. Caregivers may also need to ask themselves, "Am I taking on too big a role? Have I failed to self-nurture and recharge?"

If you are a caregiver:

- Be self-aware, taking your own emotional temperature regularly.
- Know yourself. Know what feeds you and depletes you. Know what your "normal" (i.e,. healthy) state is, and recognize when some extra care may be needed.

- Have a personal support system (24-7). Find someone you can call in the middle of the night.
- Having a supportive, approachable family is helpful.
- Explore mini-holidays and creative pursuits.
- Learn to be “in the moment.”
- Learn to say “no” or “not this time.”
- Surround yourselves with positive people.
- Find out what heals you when you are feeling overwhelmed.
- Find a hermit spot and use it daily.

It is important to take care of yourself because a burnt-out caregiver can be at risk for not providing good care. If you don’t take care of yourself, it is possible that you will begin to neglect the person who you so want to care for.

Did you know that neglect is also a form of elder abuse? Not meeting the basic physical needs of a person in your care is considered passive abuse. One needs to be very self-aware in knowing your own limitations, and to reach out for help when you need it. One example of a caregiver who might not be not meeting her own needs or the needs of the one in her care, is a caregiver not answering a person when they have asked the same question over and over.

Also, make yourself aware of the support that is available. Be familiar with Compassionate Care Benefits. Each province is a little different but in Ontario, family members who care for any close family member can claim EI (Employment Insurance) benefits if their loved one is expected to die within six months. Their job is held for them when they return to their normal schedule. And family definition has been expanded to “whomever” the ill person says it is. This time is precious time acting as main caregiver.

In closing, consider the words of the Serenity Prayer:

“God, grant me the serenity to:
Accept the things I cannot change;
Courage to change the things I can, and the Wisdom to know the difference.”

If you are called to be a caregiver, care for yourself, and the person you are caring for with acceptance, courage, and wisdom.

Janet Stark is a Lay Minister and elder at St Paul’s Presbyterian, Kemptville. She has served as the Multifaith Chaplain and Spiritual Care Manager of Brockville General Hospital, former palliative care educator of Lanark, Leeds & Grenville and a writer on many spiritual and palliative care topics.

She is also a Care Clown named Jan-Anne the Nutcase, and a certified Senior’s Fitness Instructor. Janet has been married for 40 years, and is a grandmother of 3 ½—there is a 4th on the way!

TOM and MARY

by Janet Stark

Once upon a time, there was an elderly couple named Tom and Mary, who lived in a small village. Even though they didn't really think of themselves as 'elderly', they had been married for 62 years and were octogenarians. They were fortunate to live in their own home, a small 1½ storey white clapboard house with a small garden in the middle of town. Lately it had been getting harder to take care of the house and property, but Tom had finally agreed to hiring a neighbour's boy to cut the grass and shovel the snow—only when it was deep though! Most times, he would just take his time to clean off the walkway and stairs to the back door himself.

It was late Fall and he was feeling Winter coming on by the familiar ache in his knees. He didn't need a cane quite yet, but he walked a bit slower each year, and now with a limp. He always took care to hang on to the step railing, which was a challenge when he had a bag of groceries in his arms.

Mary was a sweet lady, and was a 'best neighbour' to everyone. She was a tiny, white-haired lady and now a bit bent over, which made her shorter than ever. She was known all over as the lady that made the best homemade soup, and if you were ever sick you

You are never too old to set a new goal or dream a new dream.

~C.S. Lewis

could count on having a fresh batch delivered to your door. Mary just shrugged it off saying, "she was just cleaning out her fridge."

Tom and Mary had lived in the village for, oh, it must be over 40 years now. Their only son had long since married and moved to Victoria where he was a University professor. They were both so proud of him, and he and his family had come home to visit almost every summer. They also once had a beautiful little daughter, but tragically she had been killed accidentally by a truck while riding her trike at the end of the lane. Mary thought she would never survive those years following the accident, and had it not been for the constant and steady support of Tom, her spirit might have been broken. But in time, her heart healed although she reserved just a little tender spot in her heart for her sorrow, which she could go back and find whenever she wanted to.

One evening, the couple retired early as they had been busy 'helping' at the church bazaar. Their 'help' now consisted of Tom selling lunch tickets, and Mary sitting behind the bake table. They were both given 'sitting down' jobs and were grateful, even though their frailty was an unspoken thing among their church family.

That night Tom had brought Mary her regular bedtime tea—good English black tea steeped for exactly three minutes in her favourite rose

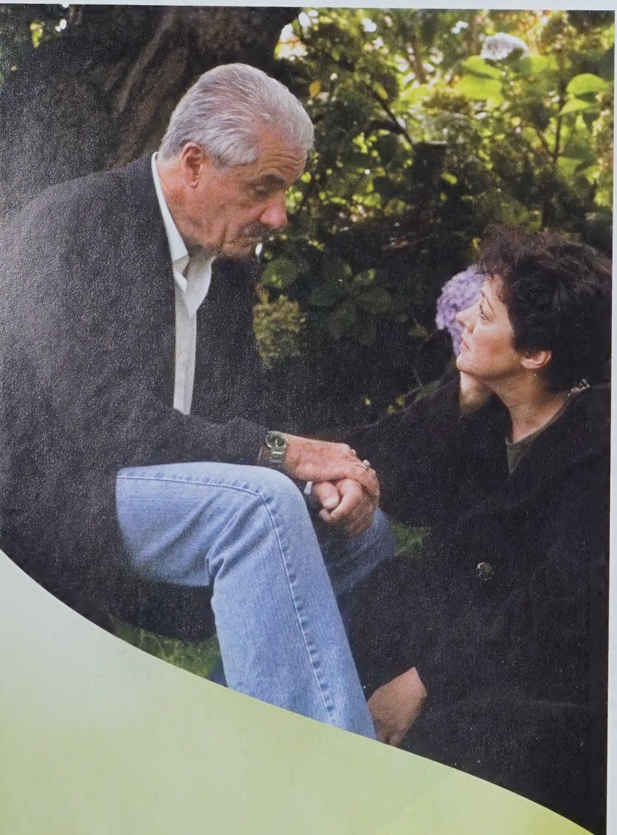
china teacup. After their traditional little kiss, Tom turned out the lights. Mary rubbed his back for a few minutes and then they both fell asleep.

The morning brought a chill and Tom pulled himself out of bed to light the woodstove in the kitchen. He would let Mary sleep a bit longer. When he came back upstairs to get her, to his dumbfounded shock, he found Mary completely cold. She had died in the night.

Tom doesn't remember too much of the next few days or even the next few weeks. It was an eclectic mix of activity and suffering, of visits and appointments, of decisions and noise and strange enough, of the normalcy of waking up every morning to the bright sun shining in the window along with the abnormality of a cold and empty place beside him.

Yes, his son and family came home right away, and were a big help. In fact, Tom didn't know how he could have gotten through those weeks without them. The grandchildren were a great blessing, but even so Tom wondered how they could laugh and play their games in the living room as if nothing had changed. Tom's mind had been far away and even their sweet voices had seemed unreal. And now as life goes, they had gone back home. He remembers waving good-bye to them at the airport, but he doesn't remember driving back home alone.

His little house now seemed huge without his Mary. It was more of a chore to rake the leaves and so he had the neighbour's boy do it. No, the neighbour's boy had offered, hadn't he? Snow was coming and that meant Christmas was coming too. Christmas was coming… What was Christmas about now? He had kindly declined his son's persuasions to fly out and join them for Christmas. He had mumbled



something about being an old man who couldn't handle the trip, and how his neighbours would see he didn't go hungry. Tom knew it wasn't the trip he couldn't handle, it was the noise and the excitement and the attention—and the loneliness in the midst of it all. "I'll be just fine, don't you worry," Tom had said. His son promised he would call every day of Christmas week.

For a while Tom politely declined invitations to go out to friends and neighbours for meals and things, but once he happened to drop in at the local Tim Horton's after a doctor's appointment. His buddies were there as they had been every morning for, 'I don't know how long', and they had been so glad to see him, and they gave him such a warm welcome it was embarrassing. But Tom didn't go back the next day, or the next.

He ate a lot of shredded wheat for breakfast and Campbell's soup for lunch. How he missed the smell of Mary's hearty homemade soup. He could not remember what he had for supper most days.

One evening, the minister dropped by … again. Tom did like talking to his minister, and he even felt comfortable with the silences between them. He had got Mary's china teacup out of the cupboard and even served the Reverend tea in it. He felt sort of safe, almost as if his presence made him feel closer to Mary's spirit. He doesn't remember what they talked about, only that he slept better on the nights after his visits.

And then it was December … and Christmas was coming. Tom didn't know what day it was in December and he had no wreath on his door and no Advent calendar hung on his fridge. There would be no Christmas tree this year, and no girlish giggles from Mary as she handed him his stocking on Christmas morning. No, this Christmas would be very different from the last 62 years—64, if you count the two years they were courting.

One Sunday morning, Tom got out of bed and dressed for church. He hadn't been out since he attended with Mary, and he wasn't sure what was different this morning. Oh yes, the minister had told him it was the day of the children's Christmas pageant and reminded him that he hadn't missed one in all the years he had known Tom.

He climbed the church steps slowly and heavily. He sat in their usual pew. He nodded his head in response to the many smiles and greetings all around him. As he sat down, he noticed something soft and blue in the pew where Mary should have been. He picked it up and held it to his face. It was Mary's prayer shawl. The ladies group had given this shawl to Mary a while back when she was getting over pneumonia. In fact, Mary had even been a part of this same ladies group, and she had laughed that they shouldn't be giving away these lovely shawls to themselves! But she had cherished that shawl and kept it at church where she frequently pulled it over her shoulders.

Tom smelled Mary's scent and so he closed his eyes so that the tears would not fall. The service began—the usual advent candle-lighting and the usual carols. Then out came the children to tell the traditional Christmas story. He didn't recognize the little girl who was dressed as Mary, and even wondered if she was too young. Well it wasn't like they had a whole lot of children to choose from these days. Mary appeared to be riding a hobby-horse donkey and she trotted down the far aisle with the young Joseph trailing behind her, stepping on his bathrobe and pulling on his head covering the whole way.

Then they disappeared at the back for a few minutes, while the narrator said the baby was being born in a stable. After singing Away in a Manger, the proud couple emerged walking up the aisle next to Tom, carrying the baby Jesus. To Tom's surprise, he noticed that the baby Jesus was a very pink, naked baby doll. Before he knew it, he had reached out with the blue shawl he was holding and handed it to little Mary. She stopped and looked up at Tom with her big blue eyes. She clumsily wrapped the naked little baby all round and round. Then without words, she smiled the biggest smile Tom had ever seen. It was contagious and so Tom smiled too. Then he looked at Joseph with his head-covering half over his eyes and smiled at him. Then Joseph laughed, and then the people in the pew in front of Tom smiled, and then the people behind Tom laughed, and then it seemed that everyone in the whole church smiled and laughed.

The minister stepped up and took the narrator's mike. He said, "The wise men gave the Christ child their gifts of gold and silver and myrrh. But this gift—from one Mary to another Mary—what baby Jesus is wrapped in, is the most valuable gift of all." Tom doesn't remember much of the ending to the service, but he does remember the warmth that came over him from the ends of the few hairs on his head to the tips of his toenails.

That was Christmas for Tom. He went home that night and said his prayers. He talked to Mary that night, out loud even. He lit the woodstove, and put the radio on—some Christmas music was playing—and he sat in his rocking chair. Then he got up and searched in the freezer until he found some cookies Mary had made months before. He ate them while they were still frozen as he sipped his tea from Mary's china teacup.

In the morning, Tom got up, and he spoke out loud to his Mary. Then he said his prayers to God, put on his old plaid overcoat and made his way down to Tim's.

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Shut Down The Bus Tours:

What Older Church Members Should Really Be Doing

By Carey Nieuwhof

So how do you engage older church attendees… say people over age 50? The question's been around a long time. And—as most church leaders could tell you—it's a bit of a loaded question.

It's also a question I'm hearing again and again, particularly from churches that are doing a great job reaching young families. Some leaders want to know how to keep older members engaged, especially when a church is doing a great job reaching young families.

As someone who turned 50 last year and whose kids have moved out of the house and into university and life, I can tell you I've thought about this question both personally and from my vantage point as a church leader. The default in many churches is simple: provide programming for over-50 adults that caters to their needs: potluck lunches, Bible studies, and social gatherings for their demographic, and, of course, bus trips.

The purpose of this post is to ask one simple question. Really? As in

Over-50 adults are not a demographic to be appeased; they're a demographic to be mobilized.

really—this is as good as it gets for people moving into their prime and then into their senior years?

I don't think so. I don't think so at all. If I have to spend the next thirty years taking bus trips, I want the first bus trip to be straight to heaven. There's a much better way for 50+ adults to spend their time, influence, and energy.

Let me explain. Here are four reasons it's time to kill the bus trip mentality far too many churches adopt for their over-50 attenders.

1. Life Isn't About Serving You

What I struggle with most about the North American dream of how to spend life in your older years is this: it's all about serving yourself, not others. I'm not saying you can't take a vacation or enjoy the life God has given you, but a thirty-year vacation? Seriously? How many rounds of golf can you play? How many beaches can you lie on? How many 4:30 buffets can you eat?

Too many churches have played into the trap of trying to cater to the needs of perfectly capable

Serving together intergenerationally keeps older adults young and helps make the young wise.

over-50 adults in their church, as though they were a demographic to be appeased, and not mobilized.

When church leaders cater to appeasing needs, they miss the mission potential of a generation.

You aren't the mission. The mission is the mission. You can fill your life with activity, or you can fill your life with purpose. It's your choice. I'm choosing purpose.

2. The Next Generation Wants And Needs The Older Generation

Perhaps one of the greatest surprises to Gen Xers (that's me), Boomers, and Elders is that Millennials want to spend time with people older than themselves.

When I was 25, I didn't want to spend time with anyone over 30. My goodness, has that changed. And I'm grateful for that.

In my work and in my leadership world, I'm surrounded by young team members. Almost everyone on my team is 15 to 30 years younger than me. And I love it. I learn and grow, and so do they.

I'm a big fan (and practitioner) of the Orange Strategy, which not only combines the influence of church leaders and families, but leverages the faith and wisdom of one generation to build into the next.

Biblical community is more nuanced and powerful than hipsters ministering to hipsters and seniors ministering to seniors. It's about pairing up the generations to learn from each other, serve side by side, and build into each other. In our church, every generation serves alongside other generations. It keeps older adults young and helps make the young wise.

It does more than that though. Serving together creates significance. I love the way Reggie Joiner puts it: people will not believe they are significant until you give them something significant to do. By giving senior adults something significant to do—like being a small group leader for 5th grade boys, 12th grade girls, young married couples, or single 20 somethings—they realize they have a contribution to make to the next generation.

Conversely, when a high school student serves at the food bank alongside a 60-year-old retired banker, they often do something more than serve food—they build a relationship, influencing one another, and grow together in life and faith. Kara Powell, in her research, found

People won't believe they are significant until you give them something significant to do….

that having generations serve together in a way that builds relationships between those really helps teens and young adults find or keep their faith.

3. Not Mobilizing Older Adults Squanders Resources

If church leaders simply pander to the consumer mindset that characterizes an older lifestyle (cruises, relaxation and rest), they deny a powerful reality that could be leveraged for the mission.

First, some workers actually don't hit their peak earning years until their 50s and 60s. Church leaders should challenge people in that category to increase their standard of giving, not just their standard of living. As you soon discover by talking to many successful business people, there's an emptiness that comes with success and money. The reality is that the emptiness they feel in your soul is actually filled by giving, not getting. Church leaders who are able to help people see that this is what they're missing will be able to leverage resources to fund the next generation. Fulfillment is found in giving, not getting.

It's more than money, though. While foolishness plagues both old and young alike (some people don't grow wiser in their senior years; they just grow older, there are decades of accumulated wisdom that get wasted if it's not leveraged for the sake of others.

There can be a significant wisdom that's lost if years get spent only in business, at the lake house, eating potluck lunches and taking trips.

As I already mentioned, Millennials love being around older adults and are wide open to insights, questions and conversations about faith and life. Leverage that dynamic, and you will see powerful transformation happen, not just in the life of younger people, but in the lives of older adults as well.

The older I get, the more I prioritize being around young people. In my case, it's mostly to ask questions, learn, and enjoy the relationship and insights. Being around the young keeps you young.

4. Sacrifice Kills Entitlement

Given the current decline in church attendance and engagement in North America and the West, passing the faith onto the next generation has never been more urgent. In fact, I believe the greatest thing this generation can do is sacrifice to bring faith to the next generation.

This is not the time for older adults to sit back, relax, and enjoy the flight given the fact that the flight is potentially headed for a crash landing. What if this one generation actually just sacrificed for the sake of another? What if they gave up their preferences in music style and taste

Increase your standard of giving before you increase your standard of living.

Ultimate fulfillment is found in giving, not getting.

so that others could come to know Christ? What if they changed their methods and preferences to preserve the mission?

Leveraging time, wisdom, insight, relationship, money, and influence—essentially, your life— for the sake of the young is the greatest legacy you can leave.

What Do You Think?

I realize this is a counter-cultural argument, but I think it's an important one.

The bottom line is this: a spirit of sacrifice is far more compelling than a spirit of entitlement. What am I entitled to as a person over 50? Nothing. But I've been blessed with much. It's time to deploy what I've been given.

Reprinted from Carey Nieuwhof's website: http://careynieuwhof.com/blog. Carey Nieuwhof is a husband, a dad to two sons and a daughter-in-law, and the founding and teaching pastor of Connexus Church north of Toronto Canada. He has a passion for helping other leaders lead like never before and does this through his blog, podcast, books, online course, and speaking engagements.

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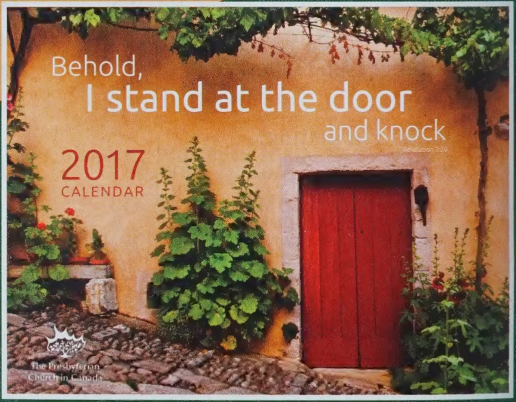

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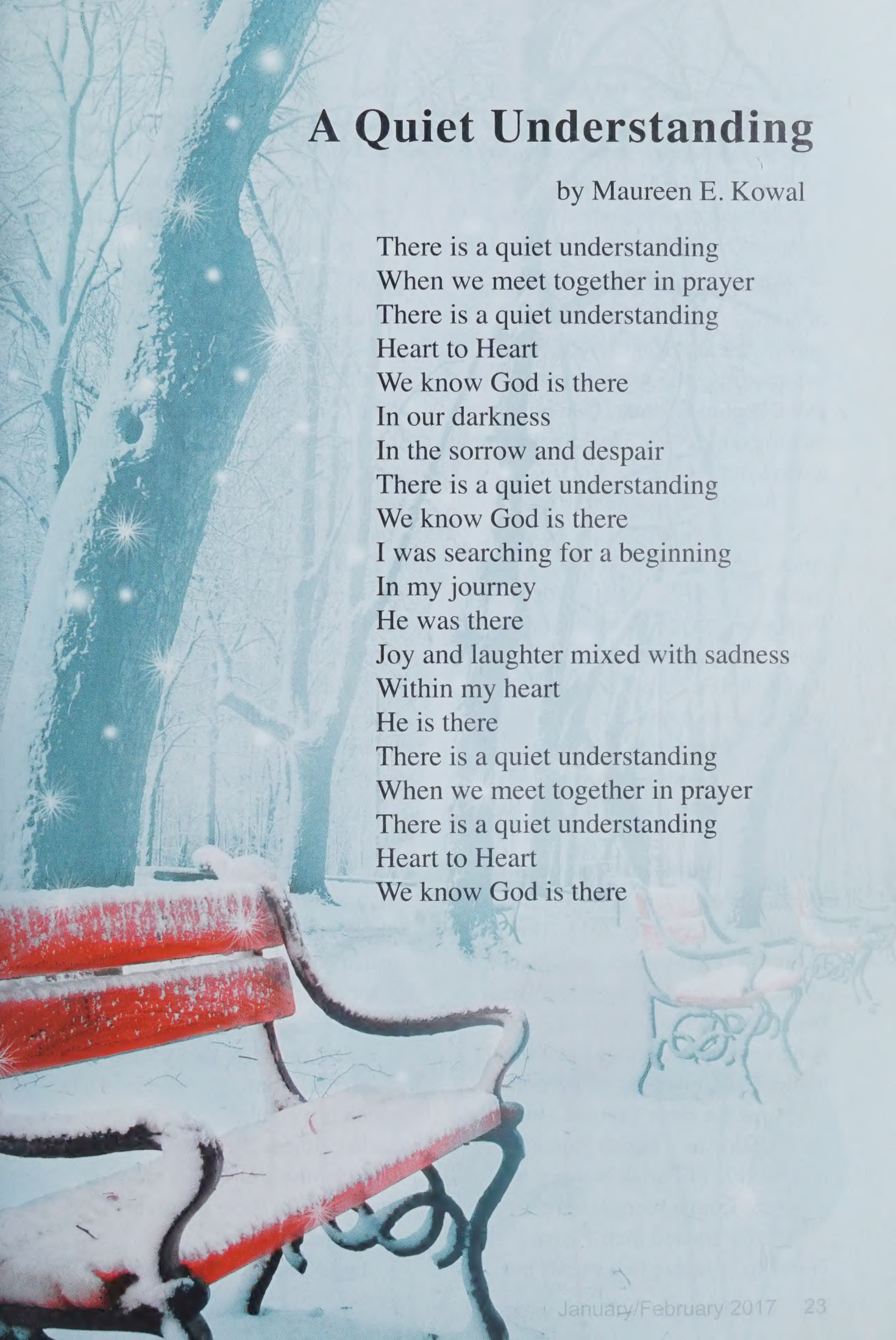

A Quiet Understanding

by Maureen E. Kowal

There is a quiet understanding
When we meet together in prayer
There is a quiet understanding
Heart to Heart
We know God is there
In our darkness
In the sorrow and despair
There is a quiet understanding
We know God is there
I was searching for a beginning
In my journey
He was there
Joy and laughter mixed with sadness
Within my heart
He is there
There is a quiet understanding
When we meet together in prayer
There is a quiet understanding
Heart to Heart
We know God is there

What is Parish Nursing?

by Karen Harding

Parish nursing is a call to healing of body, mind, and spirit using knowledge as a Registered Nurse and incorporating the importance of faith in the healing process. One important fact to consider is, “Healing does not always mean cure.”

Churches decide on the focus of the ministry depending on the congregational demographics and the needs of the community. When Duff’s Presbyterian Church in Puslinch was considering their focus, they wanted it to include a Parish Nurse. They wanted a program that would be an outreach program to anyone in the surrounding community, as well as the people who attend, that focused on seniors.

Duff’s church chose to become a member of ICHM (InterChurch Health Ministries) in 2011. This not-for-profit organization, established in 1982, educates and supports Parish Nurses, as well as supporting the congregation. I went to Emmanuel College at University of Toronto part-time for three years to obtain my certification as a Parish Nurse. To use the title of Parish Nurse you must graduate from a recognized program.

Duff’s wanted their Parish Nurse to organize two events per month, one to include food with the option of taking home leftovers to provide those in attendance with another meal. When I began, I also did a congregational health survey that included health concerns and what types of programs people were interested in having in our community. The Health Committee at Duff’s Church looked at the results and we developed our program to help meet the wants and needs of the congregation.

As their Parish Nurse, I organize a monthly luncheon with speakers who I feel would be of interest to the people who attend. The lunch consists of a homemade soup followed by cupcakes. The ‘leftovers’ go home with the people who attend and I also take some of the leftovers to those who are unable to attend due to illness or that are shut-ins. The attendance is approximately 20–30 people each month.

I also organize two fitness programs within the church—Cize, which is a combination of dance and cardiac fitness and SMART, which is run by the VON. The monthly attendance to these programs is 55 people per month.

I also visit people at their

homes, long-term care facilities, and hospitals. I will attend appointments with clients or family meetings with discharge planners to offer support and knowledge. I work ten hours per week in the community, which is paid by the Duff's congregation and I use the facilities at Duff's rent free. It has been a real pleasure to assist people who feel they are sometimes lost when navigating our health care system.

Sometimes I provide a friendly visit to those who are isolated and feeling lonely or to those that need a referral to CCAC (Community Care Access Centre) or a local support program. Often people need clarification regarding a new diagnosis or medication. I also support people before and after surgery, and work at Trillium Health Partners in Mississauga in ambulatory care. This gives me a wide knowledge base and experience when it comes to something simple like a knee arthroscopy or complex like cardiac bypass surgery.

To quote Mother Teresa, "I can do things you cannot, you can do things I cannot; Together we can do great things!" It has been a pleasure and blessing to help people in need since 2011. Working with Duff's Church, this program continues to grow and change with the community needs as the church reaches out in Puslinch, Ontario.

Finding the Centre

by Linda J. Bell

Have you ever had a talk or an article all written out in your head, late at night, when you were trying to sleep? Then in the morning, when you tried to recreate it, recapture it, it's gone! As I sit at the keyboard this morning, I find that is what's happened with me.

So, let me begin by stating boldly, baldly, and simply—take time to breathe, time to be with God.

I suggest that this is rather bold because in our society today, there is a growing trend to "add on," predominantly when it comes to activities and obligations. Admittedly, I'm coming from a female perspective, but this seems particularly true for women. As one example, most of us acknowledge that the raising of children and the maintenance of the home need to be joint responsibilities, but if the meals aren't ready, if the laundry needs to be done, if the house is dusty, if it's teacher-parent night at the school, if our children have appointments or need a ride to their activities, our first reaction is to try to juggle our schedules to make everything fit. And if we can't do everything, the second reaction appears instantly—guilt.

It's all too easy to lose ourselves in all the busyness that comes from juggling family, work, church, and life. It's no wonder that sometimes questions niggle at us—questions such as, "What's it all about?" and "Who am I in this maze of responsibilities, this flurry of activities?"

There is so little time or space for us to stop and ask ourselves who we are and what we are to be in this life that God has designed and given to us. In fact, I have often thought that we would be more aptly described by the phrase "human doings" rather than "human beings."

Nowadays, what we do, what we produce, how much we can accomplish in a day—these seem to define us and send us daily back to the wheel to see if we can run faster than we did yesterday.

Yet we are more than what we do, produce, accomplish—we are other than even all of this together. In fact, what we do should be an expression, a celebration of who we are, not the definition of who we are. Please don't misunderstand me at this point. I don't discount or minimize the importance of all that we are doing. It's more a matter of where we start each day, with the perspective we have on our lives.

I would like to call us (and I do include myself in this) to consider anew that we are God's creation—that God watched and delighted as we were being knit together in our mothers' wombs (Psalm 139). Then, as we consider this, I suggest that if we are going to lose ourselves, let it be in God's love for us and our love for God and all, everyone, God has brought into our lives.

Martin Luther comments on his life, "I have so much to do that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer." He also said, "Pray and let God worry."

To begin each day in prayer, to infuse the moments of our day in prayer is to find ourselves, to discover meaning and purpose in our lives.

One of my favourite descriptions of prayer is "wasting time with God." Now, I know that we likely react adversely to the very idea of "wasting time" when it is such a precious commodity. However, let's remember that it's with God—with the Creator who knows us thoroughly, through and through (again Psalm 139) and who longs for our joy, who longs to be one with us.

When I think of prayer, an image comes to my mind. It comes from some reading of St. John of the Cross. He said that he often took his prayer shawl into the monastery chapel, late at night, to pray. Then, in the morning, he would find that he had fallen asleep on the shawl, mid prayers. He called it "resting in the arms of God."

There are so many ways to pray and it could perhaps be described as an adventure to discover which form of prayer we are being called to embrace. It might be meditation, chanting, spiritual imaging, scripture reading/reflection, affirmations, physical exercise, and so forth. It could be as simple as attending to our breathing—considering that God's Spirit enters into our lives with each inhalation, that God's presence infuses our lives as surely as our breathing infuses every part of our bodies with the oxygen essential to life. It could be adopting one of a myriad of spiritual disciplines. The form is secondary, as long as it "fits" you-me, as long as it fills you-me with a profound desire to spend time every day engaged in it. What is primary is that we make the commitment to ourselves, before God that everything we do, every relationship of which we are a part, will begin and continue with God at the centre.

When I catch myself caught up in the frenzy of living, of trying to meet varied expectations and demands, when I realize that I'm scurrying from one thing to another, when I and my centre are so obscured by the emergencies and crises that pop up out of everywhere, I stop. I breathe in and out. And I sit down to pray, to remember the God who loves me and cherishes me and longs to be in relationship with me, and sometimes to "rest in the arms of God."

The Rev. Dr. Linda J. Bell has been retired for three years, after 38 years of full-time, active ministry in the Presbyterian Church in Canada. She continues to supply pulpits and to lead occasional conferences and study days, as requested. One of her particular interests is in teaching and practicing spiritual disciplines.

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Gathering, Coming Together in Christ

by Sarah Kim

Rooted In Love—that is the theme of the Women's Gathering. You might think, that's so typical of women—talking about love again! Well, it is true that women are into love. After all, women are nurturers. They want to raise their family with love and give their children many good things filled with love. They want to strengthen their families with much love and support. So, yes, women are into love. But our event, the National Presbyterian Women's Gathering, is more than about love.

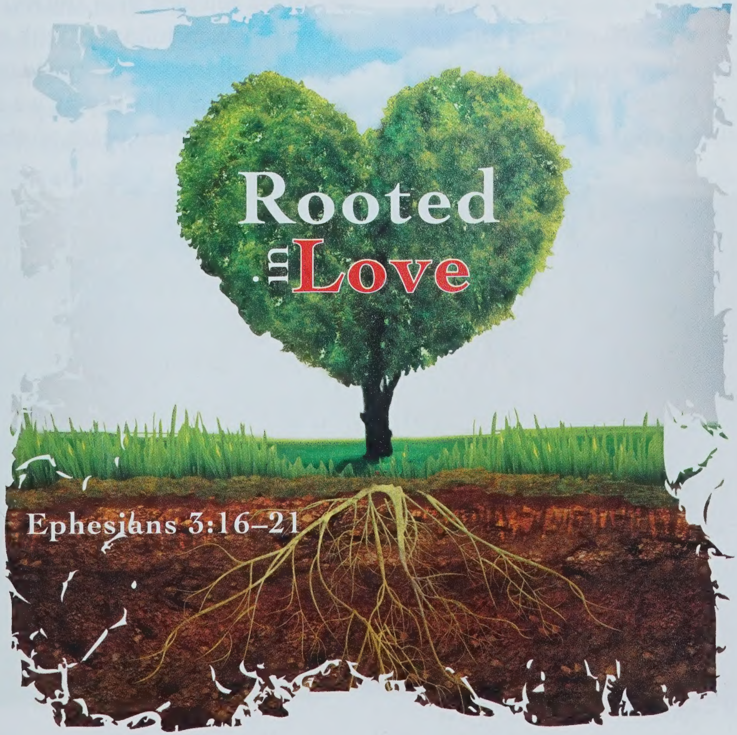
It is very much about being in community. It is about coming together as Christians. In our modern individualistic society we don't value community enough. Even the church as a community is not valued enough. People generally don't feel the urge to be part of the church because they don't appreciate the need to be part of a faith community. Even raising their children in a faith community is secondary to putting them into sports and other activities.

It is God's purpose that we gather as believers. The prophet Isaiah had the vision to gather people from all nations—from north, south, east, and west. He said in Isaiah 43:8–9, "Bring forth the people who are blind, yet have eyes; who are deaf, yet have ears! Let all the nations gather together, and let the peoples assemble." Isaiah also says in Isaiah 2: 3, " Many peoples shall come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." In Hebrews 10:24-25, we are encouraged to meet and gather. It says, "let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

So, gathering is God's purpose and calling. God wants the believers to gather so that He can teach us his ways and so that we may walk in his paths.

When we gather in Christ, wonderful and miraculous things can happen. Look what God did for the multitudes in John 6:1–15 when Jesus fed 5000 (probably more like 10,000 including the women) from five loaves and two fish. The people were gathered to hear Jesus; they came to be fed spiritually. They did not expect to be fed like this. They only expected their souls to be replenished perhaps. But Jesus fed them physically and their spirits were more than replenished as they experienced the miracle Jesus performed. Miracles happen when we are gathered in Christ and with the Spirit.

But miracles are not the only reason why it is good to gather. When we are in community, we gain strength; we are fortified from the sharing and support that we receive from each other. It is something we cannot gain when we are by ourselves, as individuals. It is a God-given gift when we are in community. There is an African saying, “It takes a village to raise a child.” That is so true, it is better for a child to be within a caring community, with many mentors and supporters taking care of them. A whole community can do so much more than any one individual.



Community is a God-given gift. For us as Christians, the church, our faith community is a gift from God. We should not take it for granted. The good news is that, this faith community goes beyond the walls of individual churches; it stretches world-side because we are part of the whole universal church.

Coming together is beautiful because it is a gathering of believers. When believers come together the Spirit binds us together as one community, despite our differences and backgrounds. Coming together as believers is different from getting together socially with friends, with family. A Christian gathering includes people from all different backgrounds, from different places, some you may know but many you may not know, but we are able to come together because of the Spirit of God. That's what makes it special—it is a coming together made possible by the Spirit of God.

At the Women's Gathering, over 500 people come together. Many of them do not know each other (most come in small groups, less than 5 to 10 from a congregation); some are from the other side of the world (like our international guests); some are from other denominations (like the United Church Women, Catholic Women's League, and PCUSA Women). We come from all different walks of life, but we are one because the Spirit of God makes us one.

As we come together at the Gathering, God will bless us. We will be blessed because we came. We will meet women from around the world and hear their stories, and we will walk in solidarity with each other so that women everywhere will be empowered. This is why we come together every three years, so that we

> And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.
>
> Ephesians 3:17b–19 (NIV)

can learn from each other, rejoice with each other, and be in solidarity with each other.

You must also come to learn. There is so much happening in the world around us. As Christians it can get confusing how we should live in this world. How do we respond to the many needs that are out there? What is the right answer to many of the justice-related issues? The issues are not always clear. We need to learn and stand together against injustices that are happening. But it is difficult to learn on our own; we need to learn from others who are experts in their field. One of our keynote speakers is Mary Jo Leddy started Romero House in Toronto, a home for refugees. Come and learn about refugees from Mary Jo Leddy.

Dr. Jean Chamberlain is a gynecologist who works eight months of the year in Uganda to teach the people there about preventing maternal deaths in childbirth. She saw so many women in Africa who died needlessly during delivery she had to help. Come and learn from Dr. Jean Chamberlain, another one of our keynote speakers, about what her organization called Save the Mothers is doing.

We are also having an Aboriginal Night where you will have the opportunity to hear Cindy Blackstock, a lawyer who speaks about the welfare of aboriginal children. Cindy Blackstock has been in the news as an expert on the welfare of Aboriginal children. She is one of our keynote speakers, and it was also recently announced that she will receive the 2017 E. H. Johnson award. On the same night, you will also be treated to a performance by aboriginal musicians and dancers.

I want you to have the opportunity to broaden your horizons and to experience the world beyond your own world. This event will provide a great opportunity for you to go out from your immediate circle of friends and church and meet people from all kinds of different backgrounds. Be prepared to take challenges. Open your eyes and see how the Spirit works in the world. The Spirit will show you wonderful things, things that you never saw before if you are open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This is what Jeremiah said, "Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known." (Jeremiah 33:3)

Also, come to rejoice. As we come together in Christ, there will be much rejoicing. We will rejoice and celebrate that we are sisters in Christ. There will be uplifting worship and praise times to help us rejoice together. This year marks the 50th anniversary of women's ordination in the Presbyterian Church in Canada. To celebrate this, we will have four women preachers who will deliver sermons that will be moving and challenging.

We will rejoice in each other's stories and lives; we will rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep (Romans 12:15). At the last Gathering in 2014, two Aboriginal women gave testimonials on the last day. They had come to the Gathering with prayer needs. Throughout the event, they visited our Spirituality Centre to pray. By the end of the event, their prayers were answered and they wanted to share this with everyone. In front of about 600 people, they gave moving testimonials. There were lots of tears, and everyone was rejoicing and weeping at the same time, but mostly rejoicing that God had answered their prayers.

We will celebrate and rejoice for women's lives and their stories of faith. The second Woman of Faith Award will be presented at the next Gathering. Through this award, the stories of many women of faith will be shared. So many Presbyterian women served their church and community for so many years, some quietly, others more boldly, but their stories were unknown to us. Through this award, we are able to hear about these women of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Lastly, come to be in solidarity. As I travel the world I meet all kinds of Christian women. I often get to hear their stories. Last year, I visited Ghana to attend an all-African Presbyterian/Reformed Church Women's Conference. The conference was called Tumekutana, which is a Swahili word which means "We have come together." At the conference, women from 22 African countries shared about their issues and their struggles. Not just in African countries, but world-wide, women are at a disadvantage for so many things in life. They fight to get education, they fight to get their rights to vote, they battle against assaults, sexual, physical and mental; they fight against injustices of all kinds, not just within their societies but also within their churches and even families. They fight oppression which is there underlying beneath the cultural façade, some forms of oppression being more subtle and some more obvious.

With so much against them,

women can be trodden down, but they do not give up. They stand strong with their faith. But they need to be empowered. African women and women world-wide need empowerment. Together, we can all be empowered, by walking in solidarity with each other. There is an African saying, "Because you are, I am." We need each other. Our existence cannot be defined in isolation. Our existence becomes meaningful because of the solidarity we have with each other.

We need to be in solidarity with the women of the church. That is one of the visions behind the Women's Gathering. God blessed us by giving us a means through which we can come together and experience God working among us. I am truly blessed to be able to serve God in this way.

Rev. Sarah Kim is the Convenor of the Planning Team for the 2017 Women's Gathering. She also serves the WMS as their Executive Director.

Reaching Forward, Reaching Back

by Anne Miller

When I attended an APCE (Association of Presbyterian Church Educators) event in Toronto several years ago, I went to a workshop where we were invited to reflect on a piece of art on the wall. It was a mountain with a narrow road that began at the bottom and slowly climbed around and around up to the top. Walking up the road was a long line of people. They were all reaching forward with one hand to hold onto the hand that the person in front of them was offering to them. It formed a human chain that kept moving up and up.

We talked in the workshop about the Psalms that speak of God's holy mountain or hill (see Psalms 15, 24, 43, 48, 78 and 99). The symbolism of ascending God's mountain is rich. Not only does this signify bringing us closer to God, reminiscent of Moses spending time with Yahweh on Mount Sinai, but we are going up, moving towards something, closer to light and holiness, and away from darkness and those things that bind us to earthly things.

When I think of mentoring, I can't help but think of that painting. In the last March/April *Glad Tidings*, I was invited to write about mentoring young people. I looked back at what I had written to consider the differences between mentoring youth and adults and realized that there are not many differences. The

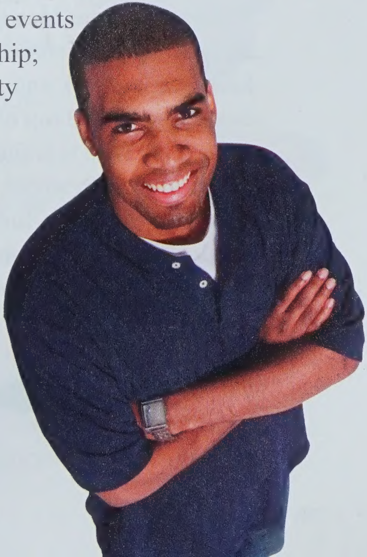
six tips from the APCE mentoring workshop that I mentioned in that article still apply here.

All of us, regardless of our age, need that hand reaching back to help pull us up the next incline of life. And all of us have another hand to reach back to the one coming after us. Our mentors are not necessarily older than us, or those we mentor who are younger than us. With adults, the concerns about Leading with Care are lessened unless the person is vulnerable in some way with a mental or physical disability or frailty due to age or health. In those cases, special care does need to be taken to protect yourself and the other person. If you are drawn to mentor someone, who is vulnerable in some way, have a conversation with your minister about it first.

Mentoring relationships may grow out of your minister asking you to connect with a new family or single person. These relationships may happen because someone will be taking on the role you currently fill at the end of your term. If you are an elder, then you have the responsibility to connect with those in your district to offer support. But, as with youth, many mentoring relationships just happen naturally, especially if our eyes are open to those around us, particularly those who are involved with the activities we take part in already.

Everyone needs mentors to offer reassurance and model ways of living that follow in Jesus' footsteps. We all benefit from the wisdom of those who've been there, done that, and can remind us of God's constant presence even when we can't see it. We need people who affirm our strengths and urge us to not get stuck and stagnate, but to keep moving forward through the challenges of life and faith, and to keep climbing that mountain and becoming all that God made us to be. Our need for relationships that nurture our souls has never been greater. Women in particular need this, and have amazing gifts to offer each other.

At church, I love to see women at different ages and stages of life nurturing each other—new moms connecting with each other, listening to each other's struggles and triumphs and encouraging self-care; women with older children comparing notes, sharing rides, and helping with corralling kids at church events and worship; new empty nesters talking with those who have adapted to their kids moving out



and receiving advice; single women going out for coffee or dinner to battle loneliness; older women checking in with each other, visiting each other when one is ill or recovering from injury, and laughing about the stories they share.

In a healthy church, these things happen all of the time. We build each other up, care about the others around us as much as we care about ourselves, and in offering friendship and fellowship we find our own needs met. There are some women we will click with and some with whom we won't. I'm so grateful to those who move out of their comfort zone to try to meet the needs of others who are not included easily.

As 2017 begins with the opportunity for a new beginning, I challenge you to do one or more of these things:

1. Think about how you can reach forward with one hand, recognizing your own need for relationship and helping to keep you on track and moving ever closer to the top of the mountain. Who is someone you admire and with whom you want to spend more time with and learn from about walking with Jesus? Who do you feel safe with sharing some of what is really going on in your world? Make an effort to start building a new connection or strengthening a previous one.
2. Compile a list of those who have mentored you over your lifetime and take the time to thank them in some way. It may be with a card, a quick phone call, a 'thank you' letter, or perhaps a prayer or journal entry if they have died. Recognize the investment they made in your life, showing God's love in a variety of ways. These people have made you stronger and helped to form who you are today.
3. Think of those reaching out a hand to you. Spend time in prayer asking who God has placed in your life to bless this year. What can you offer them? coffee out? a phone call of encouragement? a quick check-in on a Sunday when you are both at church? These are all great places to start and grow a relationship of support and care. Listen carefully to their needs, their openness to your care and support, and for where God may want this to go. Be aware of your own limits and work to keep balance in your life so that you can be a helpful presence.

Some of us are fantastic listeners, some are great at planning outings that lift spirits, some are comfortable teaching others to pray and committing to praying with and for them, some have great wisdom to share with sensitivity, some have a tremendous gift of sharing their faith, and some are just good at being a constant presence and helping in practical ways. God has given every one of us gifts to offer and to build up on those coming from behind us. We all can offer inspiration in how we live the love we have found in Christ.

As you embark on this New Year and all of the opportunities it brings, make a commitment to seek God's holy hill and to keep climbing the mountain to be in God's presence. And don't forget to give thanks to all those who have held out their hand to you in friendship and to those who bless you by reaching for yours.

Anne Miller is Creative Director for Seed of Grace resources. She is also a lay worship leader, workshop and event facilitator, and a published freelance writer of curriculum, articles and other resources. She is passionate about the critical role that Christian education plays not only in the life of congregations but in individual families and people of all ages as we together for community as the people of God.

We build each other up, care about the others around us as much as we care about ourselves, and in offering friendship and fellowship we find our own needs met.

Lost Sheep, Lost Coins, Lost Pearl Necklace

by Jean Clelland

Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbours, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.' *Luke 15: 8,9*

The Rev. Jean Morris preached a sermon at Evening Grace on Labour Day Sunday entitled: A Vision of God for a Bad Dream World based on Psalm 145. Two days later I told her that over those two days I experienced that sermon, except in reverse—A Bad Dream Sunday Afternoon and a Vision of God. Here is my story…

A week ago last Sunday afternoon, the day before Labour Day, I went for my usual walk in Confederation Park. This day, as I do only once in a while, when I came to the end of the park I felt fresh enough that I decided to continue further through Queen's Park Cemetery to spend a few minutes at my husband Bill's (and someday my) grave site. I broke a couple of dead branches off a nearby spruce tree and deposited them in a dumpster.

Returning home, it felt good to have increased the normal 45 min walk to 1½ hours. Taking off my jacket, I saw in the mirror that my heart shaped pearl necklace was missing. Getting back in the car, I returned in a state of agitation and retraced every step I took earlier, head down scanning the grass and pathways back and forth in a vain search for this precious piece of jewelry.

When I got to the cemetery, I looked behind the grave stone, wondering if when leaning over toward the spruce tree, it might have fallen off. I even checked the dumpster, retrieving the hopeless branches for examination. Every moment I searched I prayed fervently, begging God, "Please help me find it, Please, please, Jesus please help me find it." I don't usually put a lot of stock in jewelry but this was a gift from Bill on our wedding day 50 years ago in November and having just visited his grave added to my grief, guilt, and loss.

I felt especially bad because on two different occasions the clasp had failed and I was able to catch the necklace thinking I had simply not fastened it properly. It was now apparent that after 50 years of wear the clasp was failing and now because I had ignored the warnings, I had lost something very valuable and precious. I returned home following a total of three hours in the park just in time to change my clothes and dash off to Evening Grace.

At the end of the service Jean asked me if I was alright. I guess she could sense and recognize some tension, but I could not talk about my loss so soon so I said I was fine and hurried away. That evening and all day Monday I handed it over to the Lord, convinced that I must not make myself sick over it. It occurred to me that if I never saw the necklace again, I would not need to worry any longer who I was going to pass it on to and that actually gave me a strange sense of relief.

On Tuesday morning first thing, I googled where to rent a metal detector and Rogers Rent All appeared. After a mystery tour, I finally found their location. The young man at the desk was sympathetic when I told him what I was looking for. He showed me how to turn the detector on and had set it on high. There were three settings options: all metals, jewelry and coin.

I returned to the park, knowing exactly where I had parked the car on Sunday and within a few meters width generally where I had walked across the grass to get from the car to the pathway. I thought my only chance would be to search the grass here first and then through the grass at the cemetery next. Along the way I would stop at the park office to see if there was a "lost and found" hoping that if the necklace was found along the pathway, it just may be turned in.

It had rained Monday night and the grass was quite wet. I took a swath down the slope to the pathway and back up again toward the car. The metal detector beeped at just about every step I took, but I found nothing. I stopped off at the car and phoned the young man at the rental desk and asked him if wet grass would throw off the metal detector because it was beeping so frequently. He assured me that it shouldn't and I should turn down the volume after a beep and see if it beeped a second time on a lower setting.

I ate my cheese sandwich which I had packed, knowing it was likely to be a long day. Off I went again scratching through the grass to the bare ground at every beep and finding nothing. One time it beeped over a small pile of dog poo, but thankfully I saw it before I stuck my finger in it. Many such false alarms were sounded, but I realized I would simply need to check them all

out as tedious as it was. By the time I had covered about 1/3rd of the space, at one beep, I set the detector down and scratched through the grass with my finger, then I saw it—two, three, four little pearls smiling up at me from deep within the matted grass. The open chain was still attached and I carried it back to the car praising God and saying "thank you Jesus, thank you Jesus" every step of the way.

When I returned the metal detector early the young man at the desk was surprised and pleased when I held up the necklace and I said to him: "Rejoice with me, the lost has been found." He said almost everybody returns the metal detectors and are disappointed because most people don't find what they are looking for.

Such a small piece of jewelry and such a big park to have lost it in, it is a miracle. I believe I was led to the very spot by Jesus with some erratic help from a rather confused metal detector.

Psalm 145 was so suitable to Jean's sermon that Sunday evening, I would like to use portions of it as our closing prayer. I have heard it said that God loves it when His children pray His own words back to him in thanksgiving and praise:

Let us pray:

> I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever. Every day I will bless you, and praise your name forever and ever. Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; his greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall laud your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts.
> On the glorious splendor of your majesty, and on your wondrous works, I will meditate. The might of your awesome deeds shall be proclaimed, and I will declare your greatness. They shall celebrate the fame of your abundant goodness, and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.
>
> The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. The Lord is good to all, and his compassion is over all that he has made.
>
> The Lord is faithful in all his words, and gracious in all his deeds.
>
> The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. He fulfills the desire of all who fear him; he also hears their cry, and saves them. The Lord watches over all who love him….
>
> My mouth will speak the praise of the Lord, and all flesh will bless his holy name forever and ever.
>
> Through Christ our Lord, and to your everlasting glory we pray, Amen.

A thank you to Fran Cormack for submitting this story. It was presented at the meeting of the Women's Fellowship this Fall. She calls the writer, Jean Clelland the "devotions lady."

E. H. Johnson Award

Each year at General Assembly, the Dr. E. H. Johnson Memorial Fund Committee makes an award recognizing a person or group for their work on the cutting edge of mission.

This year, the Dr. E. H. Johnson Memorial Fund Committee is pleased to announce Dr. Cindy Blackstock as the recipient of the 2017 Dr. E. H. Johnson Memorial Fund Award.

Dr. Blackstock is Executive Director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada and Professor at McGill University School of Social Work. A member of the Gitksan First Nation, Blackstock has 25 years social work experience in child protection and Indigenous children's rights. She received a PhD in Social Work from the University of Toronto in 2009. Her doctoral thesis was on the inequality in Canada's child welfare system.

In January 2016, at great personal cost, Blackstock, along with the Assembly of First Nations, won a landmark victory on behalf of Indigenous children. The Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ruled that successive governments have racially discriminated against First Nations children by providing less funding for child welfare services on reserves than was provided for other children living in Canada.

Blackstock has addressed contemporary inequalities experienced by First Nations children and youth by engaging children and young people and other members of the public to implement evidence-informed solutions. This reconciliation-based approach has been recognized by the Nobel Women's Initiative, the Aboriginal Achievement Foundation, the Indigenous Bar Association, Frontline Defenders and many others.

An author of numerous articles and a widely sought after public speaker, Blackstock has collaborated with other Indigenous leaders to assist the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child in the development and adoption of a General Comment on the Rights of Indigenous Children. She currently serves as a Commissioner for the Pan American Health Organization's study on Health Equity and Inequity.

Dr. Cindy Blackstock will be a keynote speaker at the National Presbyterian Women's Gathering, Rooted in Love, on Saturday, May 20, 2017.

It is the mandate of the Dr. E. H. Johnson Memorial Fund Committee to recognize work on "the cutting edge of mission." In naming Blackstock as the 2017 recipient, the Committee recognizes her tireless, visionary and risk-taking work on behalf of First Nations children and families, and her ongoing advocacy on behalf of First Nations peoples.

The Dr. E. H. Johnson Award was established in honour of the leadership of Dr. E. H. (Ted) Johnson who worked with governments, organizations and partners in Manchuria, and then in Nigeria during the Biafran War, influencing church policy in the position of Secretary for World Mission for The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Over the past three decades both individuals and organizations, in Canada and in other countries, have been recognized.

In offering this Award to Blackstock, the Committee is mindful of the church's complicity in the history of Indigenous peoples in Canada, and particularly in the legacy of residential schools. The Presbyterian church's 1994 Confession to God and Indigenous peoples says, in part, "With God's guidance our Church will seek opportunities to walk with Aboriginal peoples to find healing and wholeness." The presentation of this Award affirms the church's desire to honour this commitment. Blackstock will accept the Award in Kingston, Ontario, on Monday June 5, 2017 when she will address the 2017 annual General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

History

The Dr. E.H. Johnson Memorial Fund was established in 1981 to continue The Rev. Dr. Edward "Ted" Hewlitt Johnson's commitment to a global view of mission and to extend the horizons of that mission. He lived his view of and commitment to mission through service with his wife Kitty as missionaries of The Presbyterian Church in Canada in Manchuria and as Secretary for Overseas Missions. He also became involved in ecumenical agencies covering many aspects of mission. When Dr. Johnson was elected Moderator of the 95th General Assembly, mission in all its variety and aspects marked his service in that office.

The Dr. E.H. Johnson Memorial Fund Committee seeks to be faithful in its work to honour the work and spirit of this "man of mission." We are grateful that we have as our responsibility the stewardship of the fund established by his family and friends and the Charles Johnson Charitable Fund. Each year the fund is augmented by donations from commissioners attending the E.H. Johnson Award Luncheon at General Assembly.

Reprinted from www.presbyterian.ca

Next month in Mission in Action, we look forward to introducing some new International Ministries staff who will begin serving in 2017.

Presbyterial

The Fall rally of the **Huron Perth** Presbyterial was held on October 25 at Knox Presbyterian Church Goderich with the theme, Seize the Day. Prayer opened the rally, and then the host minister, the Rev. Bill Vanderstelt, and Goderich WMS President, Margaret McGillivray, welcomed us. The WMS purpose was recited in unison followed by devotions. Our morning speaker, Mary Jane Bisset, led an interactive Bible study on Psalm 118.

We began the afternoon with singing. Then our speaker, Colleen McGuire, portrayed "Mrs. Dickson" in a one-woman play about the early days as a matron at the Goderich jail.

Past President, Mary Duffin, informed us of upcoming events and prayer closed the meeting.

Waterloo-Wellington Presbyterial Fall Rally was held at Westminster-St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Guelph on October 17.

Delicious desserts were served by the ladies of Westminster-St. Paul's prior to the rally, and then President Dr. Wilma Welsh, opened us in prayer, and welcomed our guests Michelle Verwey and the Rev. Dr. Glynis Williams from International Ministries.

Then, the Rev. Karla Wubbenhorst welcomed us on behalf of the congregation and led us in worship, reminding us that we are fearfully and wonderfully made, and that we should at all times remember to be thankful for all of God's gifts, which are granted even before we ask.

Our speaker was Michelle Verwey, who makes regular trips to India to teach nursing skills for a few months at a time at the MIBE Graduate School of Nurses, and the Central Regional Board of Health Services of the Church of North India. Michelle brought us up to date on changes which have recently occurred in her work there among the Bhil people, the indigenous people of the state of Madhya Pradesh. New government regulations affecting all non-government organizations have closed our Indian partners' foreign currency accounts, making it much more difficult for us to be able to support programs such as community nursing in the villages. The rules keep rapidly changing and we can only pray that there will be more changes, which will allow us to continue to assist our Bhil friends there who are already among the poorest of the poor in India. The Bhil people have always been brave and resilient and we will not abandon them.

Rev. Wubbenhorst closed the meeting with a Benediction.

Barrie Presbyterial held their Annual Meeting on June 7 at Stroud Presbyterian Church. Mary Veale-Parker welcomed all and opened the meeting with prayer. The Rev. Doug Crocker, minister at Stroud, brought greetings from the church. Then, Dorothy and Peter Ruddell presented the devotions.

The 2015 Annual Reports were given and accepted. Reports of the 2016 Synodical in Elmvale were all positive. Elaine Steele gave a Council report.

A memorial service was presented by Jill Pardy for the four WMS ladies who passed in 2015. Prior to a delicious lunch, Tori Smit installed the 2016–17 officers.

Rev. Deb Rapport, Community Chaplain and ARISE Ministry Director, was our afternoon speaker. This ministry operates out of Toronto and is partnered with Evangel Hall, Salvation Army, and the Young St. Mission. ARISE provides outreach and pastoral care for women in or seeking to exit the sex trade. She shared stories from the Pan Am games in Toronto 2015. A group of them went into the streets from 9:00 p.m. to 3:00 a.m. to give out outreach bags and build new relationships. ARISE offers clothes vouchers and free self-defense programs (Jiu Jitsu). Most girls are just 13-year-olds when they enter the sex trade. They offer them goal-oriented support once a trust is formed. ARISE is one of the WMS Together We Can! projects. Elaine Steele thanked the Rev. Deb Rapport for her work in the past nine years with ARISE. Members of the Presbyerial donated items for the outreach bags, e.g., gum, mints, Band-Aids.

Peter Ruddell closed the meeting with prayer.

~Jill Pardy

Knox WMS, St. Thomas, held their Thank-offering meeting on October 18 with guest Shirley Miller sharing a presentation of an Exposure Trip to Guatemala. Pictured with Shirley are President Pat Lang, Marion McKenzie, and former SWO Synodical President Pauline Lindsay.

Remembering

Ethel Janke
Ladies Auxiliary
Calvin Presbyterian
Church, Abbotsford BC

Catherine McEachern
Women of the Church,
St Andrews, Bolsover ON

Catherine M MacRae
Kenyon Presbyterian
WMS, Dunvegan ON

Isabel McRae
First Presbyterian,
Edmonton AB

Iris Orton
St. Andrew's WMS,
Kamloops BC

Grace Ramsay
WMS St Andrew's/
Strathcona Park,
Kington ON

Willamine (Billie)
Marshall
Robertson Auxiliary,
Knox Church, Milton ON

Dolena Wilson
St. Timothy's Afternoon
Circle, Ottawa ON

Ruth Walker
St. Stephen's, Ottawa ON

Barbara Hillis
Ruth McLean Auxiliary
St. Andrew's Petrolia ON

Madeline Novak
Jean Oke
Knox Presbyterian
Church, Welland ON

Circulation News

If I received your renewal form by late November, you should see any changes you sent on this edition. Please double check any address changes and let me know if further corrections need to be made. If you are the *Glad Tidings* contact person, please check in with any new subscribers to be certain they received their first edition.

A big thank you to all that renewed your subscription this year. Some have expressed concern that *Glad Tidings* might soon no longer be in circulation. Know that the best way to keep *Glad Tidings* publishing is to talk about it, pass it along, and continue your own subscription. We are as strong as our readers. Also, know that we can accept new subscriptions at any time—you don't need to wait to start or give a new subscription.

Finally, know that I love reading your notes and comments that you sometimes include with your renewal. I like seeing the many familiar names that I come across, some that I know personally, and some that I know only by name. Thank you for your support.

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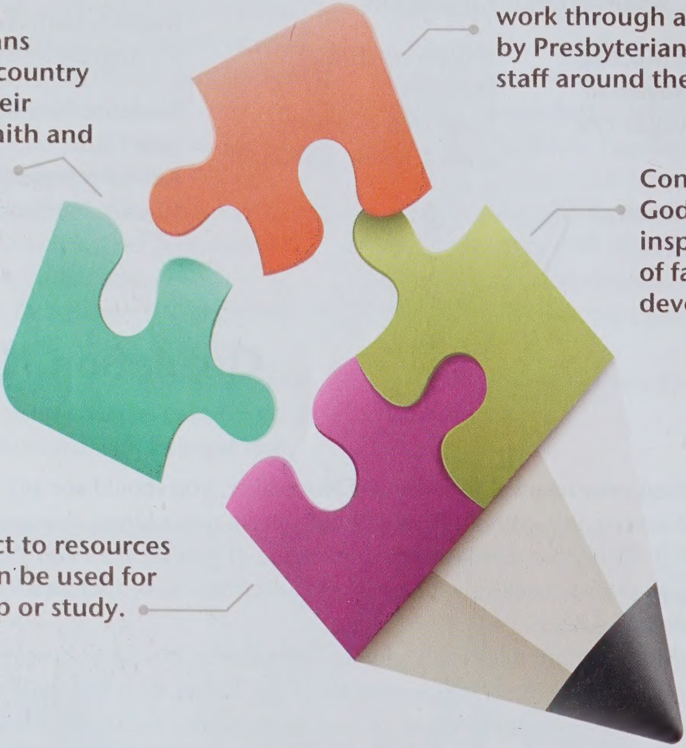

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Cover photo: Provided by Save the Mothers

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Editorial

Justice. Change. Belonging. These are just a few of the themes in this month's *Glad Tidings*. I have enjoyed reading the articles as they have come in. They are challenging and inspiring.

Lots of time when I think of my faith, I think of the peace it brings me. I think how it fills my life. I think of God's unconditional love for me. This edition of *Glad Tidings*, reminds me that I need to move beyond me. Yes, God's love is unconditional, but God also calls me to live a life loving others. In this edition, you will read stories of those who are doing just that.

At St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Ottawa, they are reaching out and loving children and youth with autism through their ministry, Common Table. Not only does Common Table reach out to those with autism, by giving them a safe place to practice their social skills, but it also helps to teach the youth and interns in the program empathy. I am sure this means the program reaches well beyond its walls as the youth take that empathy with them to their schools, sports teams, and their homes.

You will also read how Jean Chamberlain Froise is working for justice for mothers in Uganda. Through her work with Save The Mothers, she works to make childbirth safer for women.

Finally, if you are looking to make changes in your church, or even in a WMS group, Theresa Cho's article is a valuable one. She provides a practical approach to change that has allowed her congregation to become more welcoming to children and their families. In her article, she talks about changes in worship, which might be something your church is currently working through. What would you be willing to leave behind to reach out with God's love to the families in your community?

Faith is a journey. At times, we are the recipients of great love and care from God and from others. At times, we need to focus on our own spiritual needs before we can go out and serve. At times, we need to be filled up. But, we can't stop at only being filled. As Katie Munnik writes in this month's *Glad Tidings*, "We receive to give." Remember, God loves you and then go and love others.

A Disciplined Experiment on Changing Worship

by Theresa E. Cho

Before I went to seminary, I graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry. I was also a teacher for children with autism. The tools and skills I learned from science and teaching, I apply in my everyday life as a pastor. Change is an everyday occurrence in the field of science and education. The whole system is designed around observing change and its effect.

However, the opposite is probably true when it comes to church or worship for that matter. As a scientist and teacher, we know that the environment is constantly changing around us and therefore we must adapt and understand what and why the change is happening. As pastors, our go-to mode is to preserve and conserve. When change does happen, it is usually met with discomfort and disagreement. I will never forget my first year serving at my current church. A year before, the doxology was taken out of the worship service. The moment my Head of Staff went on sabbatical, I was bombarded with parishioners, who were trying to convince me to put it back in the service. Being new to my call and this church, I obliged not knowing the history of what had happened.

Change does not have to be negative nor does it have to incite panic among our parishioners. Change is natural and, therefore, inevitable. The challenge is what do we do in the midst of the change that is happening around us. How does our worship and our experience with God interact with the changes in our lives, people's needs, as well as the community?

Many churches are finding the need to change the way they worship—whether it is because of declining attendance, changing demographic, better use of space, or desiring to be more innovative. One of the fears of change in worship is failure. Worship experience is subjective so how does one know if the change is positive. Surely, you will hear from those who do not like it, but that doesn't necessarily mean the change isn't effective. Vijay Govindarajan, author of "Reverse Innovation" says, "Failure is not the real enemy of innovation. The real enemy is prolonged expensive failure." Let's face it, for many of our congregations, not changing is more of a threat of failure than just trying that ends in not working out.

When change in worship happens for no clear reason or thought, it usually causes unsettled feelings to arise. But what if we took a more disciplined approach similar to how a scientist or teacher would? My Head of Staff and I agreed to enter into a time of a disciplined experiment where we would make some intentional changes to the way we worship. The thought was we would just try something to get a clearer idea of what needed to actually change. I took the first two months and my Head of Staff would take the next few months. We would then regroup and compare notes to see how the experiment went.

For my two months, I harkened back to my time as a teacher, where I would create an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for each of my students. An IEP assesses the current level a student is performing; sets measurable goals; tracks a student's progress in meeting those goals; and brings in outside support to help the student meet those goals. I created an IEP for my church.

Assessment of current state of worship:

For the past few years, I have been slowly moving our worship

services to be more family-friendly. This meant creating space in the sanctuary for strollers and toddlers to run around as well as places for kids to read books and colour. The extra space also created room for those using walkers and wheelchairs as well. In addition to that, we allowed coffee, juice cups, Goldfish, and snacks in the sanctuary. Providing more space for families with small children also meant more noises. We had to change the way we viewed children in worship, going out of our way to make parents feel comfortable to worship with their children. In the bulletin, it would read "Parents are free to wander when restless," meaning that it is okay for people to move about in the sanctuary.

Even with all these changes, I still struggled with one thing. Once the kids enter 6th grade, they rarely come to church. I've tried starting Middle School programs and planning fun events, but these kids are already over-scheduled with sports, volunteering, and other activities. The dilemma stems from the fact that if these kids are only in church regularly from birth to fifth grade, then how will they know what worship is about if they are rarely in worship? Plus, I wasn't convinced that the mere hour they spent in Sunday School was really teaching them anything. One hour is not enough to build biblical knowledge.

So we needed to plan worship services that were more intergenerational—not kid-friendly, not even intentionally family-friendly, but truly where all ages, personalities, comfort, and needs had moments to enter into worship. By moving to a more intergenerational format, the adults hopefully will benefit as well. I've noticed that I no longer can assume that anyone whether adult or child would be familiar with what I would consider common stories of the Bible like Jonah and the big fish, Noah and the ark, or Jesus feeding the 5000 to name a few.

Set measurable goals:
Here were the goals and changes that were made:

The first change was the arrangement of the pews. Because the pews were not bolted down, it gave us an opportunity to try a more circular seating arrangement. The intent was to provide more space in the middle for creative and interactive worship elements and allow people to see one another.

Also, no more children's sermons. Because kids would be able to participate in worship with their family, there is no need for a children's sermon. Prayers, music, and scripture would be designed in a way for parents to sit with their children in worship so that they can teach them and the kids can observe those around them on how to worship.

Sunday School for K-Fifth grade, which usually met at the same time as our worship service, was also changed. Instead of being apart from the whole service, they had the option of participating in an age-appropriate lesson during the sermon time and then return for the remainder of the service.

The worship service was simplified to four parts: *Gather* (Call to Worship, Song, Confession & Assurance, and Passing the Peace), *Engage* (Scripture, Sermon, Song) *Respond* (Prayers of the People, Choir Anthem, Collection of Offering & Announcements), and *Depart* (Song, Benediction). I did not change the structure of the service, but had flexibility within the four parts to do something creative.

I implemented interactive elements throughout worship. Because this was new to people, we spent time to use these elements as teachable moments. To increase the participation of singing, we sang simple songs and often sang them acapella, teaching them each part of the song. To give people the opportunity to engage in the Word and prayer, we sometimes set up interactive prayer stations during the "Prayers of the People" time for people. You can check out my blog for more information and ideas about interactive prayer stations: http://www.theresaecho.com/interactive-prayer-stations. To engage all ages in the reading of scripture, we used more storytelling and call and response litanies. Here is a breakdown of some ideas that happened during the nine Sundays of my disciplined experiment:

> For the *first* Sunday, nothing to new was introduced since the structure, seating arrangement, and changes to Sunday School were all new. The most noticeable change was the selection of songs sung and the more engaging way our choir director led and taught the songs.
>
> Because the *second* Sunday was close to the remembrance of 9/11, we had interactive prayer stations set up around the theme of love and peace. All kids stayed in worship. I worked with the choir director to adapt a sermon and weave in parts of the musical, *Rent—Season of Love*.
>
> For the *third* and *fourth* Sundays, we continued to live into the new structure of the service. I weaved in songs and prayer together for the Call to Worship and the reading of Scripture.
>
> On the *fifth* Sunday, there was a baptism. During the sermon time, the K-Fifth graders had a lesson on baptism. They decorated a baptism box to give to the baby, filled it with baptism symbols, and wrote a promise to the baby. "I promise to pray for you and show you where the good cookies are at coffee hour." During the baptism, parishioners were invited to add their own promises to the box, which was then given to the parents.
>
> The next month was "Hunger Awareness Month." On the *sixth* Sunday we celebrated World Communion Sunday. During the sermon time, the K-Fifth graders had a lesson on World Communion and prepared the bread for the Table. Using food colouring in milk, they "painted" symbols of peace on slices of white bread. The bread was then toasted to prevent it from getting soggy. It was great to see people sharing colourful bread that the kids prepared.
>
> The *seventh* Sunday, we had interactive prayer stations set up again, this time focusing on issues of hunger and the story of Jesus feeding the 5000. Worshippers learned about our food pantry, UNICEF, and the food bank.
>
> The *eighth* Sunday, the K-Fifth graders learned about the Heifer

Project, where they prepared for the following Sunday's bake sale by making signs. During the week, parents and the kids were instructed to bake together, where they could share what they learned about the Heifer Project. The following Sunday, the kids hosted a bake sale and raised money to buy animals for a village.

Use Resources:

These changes didn't happen all at once or even overnight. We grew into it as the needs changed. We grew into it as we adjusted to the different ways of being a community. In some ways, the pastors and staff needed time and still need time to grow into it as we learn new ways of pastoring, teaching, and serving this particular church community. We also didn't do it alone. Because we are a small church, we didn't have a worship committee, but we collaborated in other ways. I worked closely with the choir director to choose songs and set the right tone. Global and Taize music were great resources to teach and sing simple songs.

Social media, like Facebook and Twitter, are also useful ways to share ideas. Pinterest can spark ideas for interactive prayer stations. To create short lessons for K-Fifth graders that followed the lectionary, Union Theological Seminary, http://www.storypath.wordpress.com, matches children's literature with lectionary texts.

The important thing to remember when doing a disciplined experiment is to try, edit, change, keep, and modify. It doesn't have to be grand. Start with figuring out what to let go of before adding anything new. And remember that change can open up possibilities that you didn't even realize were possible.

Reprinted, with permission, from https://theresaecho.com. Theresa E. Cho will be leading a Forum and the Spirituality Centre at The Presbyterian Women's Gathering this May.

Theresa balances her time by serving as a church co-pastor, subverting her husband's diet with baked goods, cheering her son at soccer games, delighting in her daughter's unique displays of being herself, and dutifully obeying her dog's daily demands of being walked, petted, and adored. She currently serves at St. John's Presbyterian Church in San Fransisco.

A Community of Belonging

by Jeremy Sauvé

“There are no bullies here” were the words of a 13-year-old boy with Asperger’s at the conclusion of his first evening as a participant in the social group, Common Table. While simple and to the point, these words sum up perfectly the atmosphere and message that those involved in Common Table are striving to create for young people both on and off the spectrum.

Common Table, formerly called Koinonia, is the brainchild of Jeremy Sauvé, Discipleship Pastor at St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Ottawa and Kerrie Kirkwood, of ASPEN ABA Services. It was born out of a desire to meet the unique needs of two distinct groups of young people.

Through his Master's studies, Jeremy wrote a paper outlining the challenging issue of cyberbullying facing many young people today. He found, one of the staggering challenges of this issue is what is called the "bystander effect," a social psychological phenomenon where the presence of others discourages an individual from intervening. In an online world, through social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Youtube, and Snapchat, this effect can reach into the hundreds and/or thousands of people either actively participating or standing by simply watching the bullying take place. If you would like more information about the issue of cyberbullying, please watch *Submit* The Documentary* (www.submitthedocumentary.com).

At the conclusion of the paper, one suggested solution to combating this challenging problem was to create opportunities for young people to develop empathy for others. Empathy, defined "as the ability to understand and share the feelings of another" would enable and empower young people to not only see the plight of those marginalized and oppressed by bullying but cause them to take action against injustice by standing up for these individuals rather than simply being a bystander.

For Jeremy, the desire is to create an atmosphere where young people are able to interact with individuals who, unfortunately, are most often affected by bullying so that they could develop empathy for them. The goal is, with Jesus as our example (Hebrews 4:15), who "moved into the neighborhood," (John 1:14, MSG) we desire to facilitate the growth of empathy in the young people of St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Ottawa.

For Kerrie Kirkwood, the challenge she faced was creating opportunities for the young people on the spectrum she was working with to interact with their peers in a safe and welcoming atmosphere. For many of the young people she worked with, there were plenty of opportunities to learn social skills, but there was very little opportunity to practise those skills they were learning.

Through many conversations, trial and error attempts, and partnering with other key individuals, they established what is now Common Table. The vision of Common Table is driven by the belief that each human being is fearfully and

FRIENDSHIP, EMPATHY AND COMMUNITY

wonderfully made, together with their abilities and needs. We seek that each person finds belonging in a community founded on Jesus' command to "love God and love others." (John 13:34–35) While we seek to promote these values, we recognize that each youth comes with their own experience and beliefs, and so there is no formal spiritual component to this program, as the intent is simply to provide opportunities for friendship, empathy, and community.

So what is it? Common Table is a monthly opportunity for youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder to interact with empathetic peers in a safe, welcoming, and fun environment. One Friday evening each month, young people from the youth ministry at St. Paul's gather together with young people on the spectrum for an evening of food, games, and social interaction.

A typical evening starts with a potluck meal with opportunities for informal peer interaction. When we first started this program, a lot of guidance was needed to help facilitate conversation but over the years, as both groups have become more comfortable, there is less and less need for this guidance. After the meal, the group is divided into two.

Led by interns, the first group heads upstairs to play board games in smaller more casual groups, and the second group stays downstairs for larger team-building, problem solving activities led by our Program Coordinator, Jen Johnson. After a period of time, the groups switch locations and continue with the evening. At the end of the evening, we've developed a tradition of holding a half-hour highly active Nerf battle, which has become a personal favorite for many of the youth. For those who find this type of activity overstimulating, we also offer a quiet room for continued relationship building.

Together with our coordinators and consultants, and, youth volunteers from Epicentre Student Ministry of St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, we are committed to building ongoing friendships with each participant. In doing so, they are on-hand to practically model social skills, pair up with participants to play games, interact socially, and help the students get involved. In turn, these volunteers learn valuable skills themselves, such as empathy, and develop close friendships along the way. Common Table is offered free of charge to families recognizing that many with children on the spectrum are faced with numerous financial responsibilities.

Common Table is a proud ministry of St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, (www.stpaulspcottawa.com) run in partnership with their youth ministry program Epicentre Student Ministry (www.epicentreyouth.com).

From a Participant:

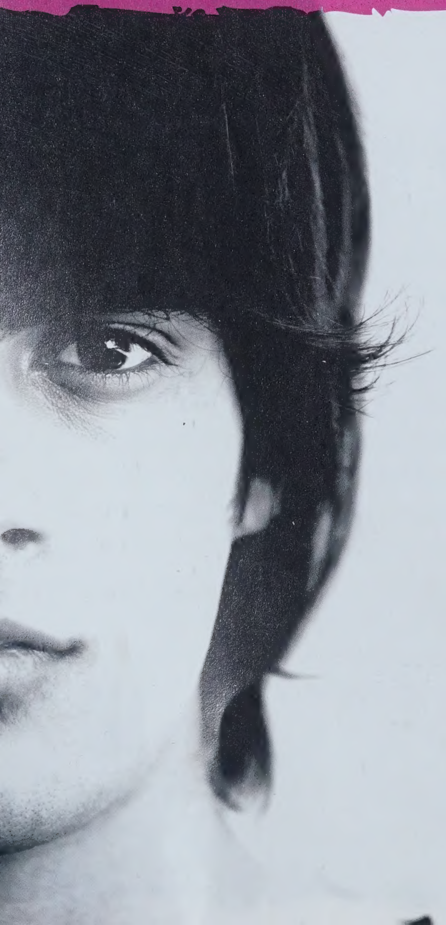
My name is Ben Hinz. I have been going to Common Table for a year and a half and joined the group at the time it was called Koinonia. I've never been disappointed with the choice of games and activities or the people I've met. I feel a sense of belonging to the group. I've played games like Dungeons & Dragons, King of Tokyo, and Pictionary. I like coming here especially because I can work on my social skills and have conversations that I find hard to have at school. I would like it if Common Table was held twice a month instead of once a month.

My verbal communication problem is difficult for me because I would like to be able to express my thoughts. One day, I would like to have a girlfriend to go out with and do things together. I would like to be able to share my sense of humour with other people too.

I'm currently going to an adult high school in Aylmer to finish my math course. I live in Ottawa with my mom during the week and with my dad on the weekends. One day I am hoping to take a Geomatics course. I go to a cooking class on Saturdays with Trait d'Union and to the gym on Wednesdays with Y's Owl.

On the weekends with my Dad, we do many things like visiting the market for meals, and going for walks and hiking. I have a black belt in Taekwondo.

From an Intern, Christine Desgroillers:



After a few years of volunteering with Common Table, I have grown and learnt so much through these interactions with those on the spectrum, as well as with other volunteers. I have been able to grow in my understanding of how these participants communicate and understand, and I have been able to develop my leadership skills along the way.

Overall, this program has greatly impacted my awareness of those with disabilities, taught me to constantly be aware of those around me, and has sparked a desire in me to continue to learn how to best treat, love, and serve others.

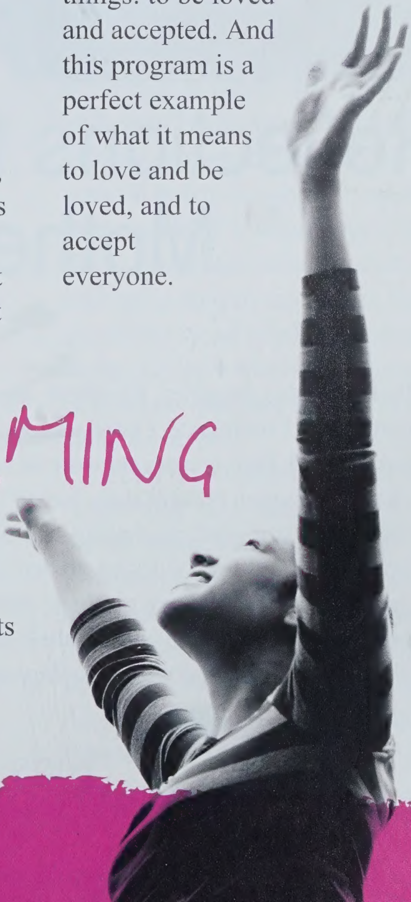
Before this program, I had little-to-no knowledge about this community (those on the spectrum), let alone how to communicate with them. Through Common Table, I have learned that they are just like any other child, teenager, or adult. Like everyone, they desire community, acceptance, and a safe environment that promotes healthy interactions. Being part of a program that provides these opporuntities to them has been such a privilege and a valuable learning experience.

Regardless of their mannerisms, confidence, and ability to communicate, they are all unique, aspiring individuals that I have come to love. I have been gifted with the opportunity to see their individual growth in terms of confidence and communication, as well as my own. It has been inspiring witnessing their ability to interact with others, as well as seeing volunteers becoming comfortable with these interactions, and learning how to best communicate with them in ways to ensure understanding and mutual friendships and respect.

Further, these interactions promote continual growth and learning outside of this program, and in our everyday lives. Personally, being a nursing student, I interact with people daily, and this program has helped expose me to the very diverse world we live in. It has prepared me well with different communication abilities, and the knowledge of what to look for in different people to help determine what tips and tricks to use with them. I am thankful to the specialists for all they have taught.

TRANSFORMING

Now, I am constantly applying what I have learned and I am aware of different ways to communicate with different people, looking at others' abilities to communicate, and how to best interact with them. It has been such a humbling and honouring experience being part of this program which has pushed me to learn, grow, and develop a love for those who at first might seem very different than you, yet once you get to know them, you learn we are all the same and desire the same things: to be loved and accepted. And this program is a perfect example of what it means to love and be loved, and to accept everyone.



Reflections for Mother's Day

by Jean Chamberlain Froese

I watch as my daughter, Elizabeth, taps "I love you mom" on my computer, and I reminisce. I barely knew what a typewriter was at her age. Of course, back then computers were as big as a room. While technology has changed, human relationships haven't. Kids still need their mothers.

I reflect on my work promoting safe motherhood here in East Africa. My colleagues and I are working so that children like my three—Elizabeth, Jon, and Hannah—will have mothers; mothers they can write love notes to, mothers to whom they can confide their secrets, mothers who will ensure that they get the care and nurturing they need.

> "Kids still need their mothers."

“An absent mother means that these children are more vulnerable.”

But not all little girls or boys are fortunate enough to have a mother to share life’s experiences. An absent mother means that these children are the most vulnerable—even in the first few days of their lives. They either do not survive, or they live with negative, lifelong consequences. In East Africa, I see many young people hobbling around (or not walking at all) due to the effects of polio—they are, typically, children who had no mothers to ensure they got their immunizations as babies.

I’ve had the privilege of living in two worlds—in the developed world, where childbirth is relatively safe (but of course, never risk free) and in the developing world, where giving birth is like a battle. Some women make it home alive. Others don’t. Here in Uganda, mothers say “goodbye” to their children when they go to deliver, hoping they’ll survive to see their little ones again. Despite having seen the plight of mothers around the world, it never occurred to me that I might not live to see my two-year-old again when I went to deliver my second baby in the safety of a Canadian hospital.

What’s the difference between ‘safe’ and ‘vulnerable’ mothers today? It all comes down to geography—where one is born and where one will give birth. Safe mothers live in a world in which they are valued and cared for at almost any cost. In contrast, vulnerable mothers live in a world in which they are considered dispensable; it’s unfortunate if they die or suffer unnecessarily, but not enough is done to save them. But shouldn’t we all inhabit one world? Sadly, for the hundreds of thousands of mothers who lose their lives every year, we do not.

There’s so much more that this ‘one world’ can—and should—do for the silent, vulnerable ones. Prioritizing safe motherhood as a development issue, ensuring funds are targeted for maternal health, promoting basic human rights for all people regardless of gender—these are places to start. Each one of us, as part of the global community, can do something. Silence, and closed hands are a clear vote against the mothers of the world.

After all, every child deserves what my girl has—the opportunity to say, "I love you mom." And every mother deserves the opportunity to hear it.

Dr. Jean Chamberlain Froese is an obstetrician-gynecologist and executive director of Save the Mothers, an organization dedicated to saving some of the more than 300,000 women who die in childbirth every year. Together with her family, she lives eight months each year in Uganda, and four months in Canada, while teaching and working clinically. She is mother to three children, Elizabeth, Jon, and Hannah.

All photos have been suplied by Save the Mothers.

Photo: Women labour on the floor of an over crowded, under resourced East African hospital.

About Save the Mothers

Save the Mothers was created when Dr. Jean Chamberlain Froese, a Canadian obstetrician/gynecologist from McMaster University, was confronted with mothers in need in Uganda.

As a volunteer with the Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada and the Association of Obstetricians of Uganda, she discovered that many of the causes of maternal death went far beyond medical barriers.

As a result, and in order to create awareness and lasting change, Dr. Chamberlain Froese harnessed the energy and commitment of Ugandan colleagues (Dr. Florence Mirembe, Dr. Pious Okong, and Dr. Olive Sentumbwe-Mugisa) and founded Save the Mothers (STM).

In 2005, STM launched its first program, a Master's of Public Health Leadership, at Uganda Christian University (UCU), near Uganda's capital, Kampala. STM immediately became one of UCU's most valued programs. It has received accolades from officials like Janet Museveni, Uganda's First Lady, and enrolled several Ugandan Members of Parliament, high-ranking national journalists, and other top professionals. Several years since its introduction at UCU, STM still routinely gets five applicants for every spot available.

STM is recognized as a groundbreaking program because of how it links leaders from various disciplines to form a network for lasting societal change. It is built on the truth that maternal mortality is not just a medical issue, but a

societal problem. STM's founders realized this early, that the need is to train not just health workers, but politicians, journalists, lawyers, educators, clergy, community activists, and other leaders. Further, the need is to then have them join forces to create change in their own culture.

In classes of 25, and in a modular format, these working professionals learn why mothers in their country are dying, how they can make a difference through their spheres of influence, and how they can network with other societal leaders.

With the help of a Canadian donor and matching funds from UCU, in 2008 STM completed Mirembe Hall, the training and residential centre that houses the program. Today, Mirembe Hall is among UCU's hallmark buildings.

Since its beginning, more than 400 East African leaders have come through the program.

Most recently, Save the Mothers launched its Mother Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative, linking STM graduates to existing health facilities, thus ensuring higher standards of care for women and children, and accountability for health professionals.

Save The Mothers International Class 2016
Uganda Christian University, Mukono

God wants our Heart

by Mona Scrivens

Many, many years ago, I met a wonderful old church lady. She was exactly what you would imagine. She had beautiful grey hair wrapped ever so neatly in a bun, and she would wear a hat, sometimes large, other times small, but always matching her blouse and skirt. I remember her wearing a lot of pink.

When she smiled, which she did often,, you could see her eyes twinkle behind her little metal-rimmed glasses. I remember her always carrying a Bible in one hand, held close to her chest as her handbag looped over her left arm. She said, "Praise the Lord" at every opportunity. She was my "church lady" long before Saturday Night Live made it a "thing."

In church, I would watch the church lady as she stood up to sing the hymns, as she bowed her head to pray, and she unwrapped a hard candy just before the minister got up to preach. She had a way about her. She was there every Sunday, rain or shine, in sickness and in health, sitting in the third pew from the front on the left-hand side.

She was quite a marvel to me. She seemed to connect with every moment of the service. She sang with passion even when the songs seemed slow and draggy. She was wide awake and seemingly engaged, nodding and saying the occasional amen, even when the sermon seemed long and boring.

One day after church, as the congregation gathered for refreshments in the fellowship hall, the church lady waved me over to join her at her little table. I happily abided.

"Mona dear, come sit," she said sweetly. I did. "Do you like church, dear?"

I wasn't sure how to answer. 'Sure,' I thought to myself. 'I like coming but the service today seemed unnecessarily long. The music was, well it was okay. And the minister ... if only he would liven it up or at least use an illustration or two, 'cuz I don't get what the old prophet he was talking about today has anything to do with my life.'

Undaunted by my silence, the church lady said, "I sure hope so, because this is what heaven is going to be like—an eternal church!" I hope even now that she didn't hear me groan!

Years and years and years have gone by since sitting at that little table with the church lady.

I have tried to be faithful, to do the right things, but I wonder, now that I am older and wiser (hopefully), is it possible to do the very things that please God, yet miss the point completely? Can we do all the right things and yet our hearts are somewhere else? Do we do the right things out of some religious obedience?

At my church, we recently concluded a series on Haggai. In part three, we tackled a challenging text, but the most important thing we learned is that **God wants our heart**.

Then this morning, I read this in Isaiah 29:13:

The LORD says, "These people come near to me with their mouth and honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is based on mere human rules they have been taught." (Isaiah 29:13)

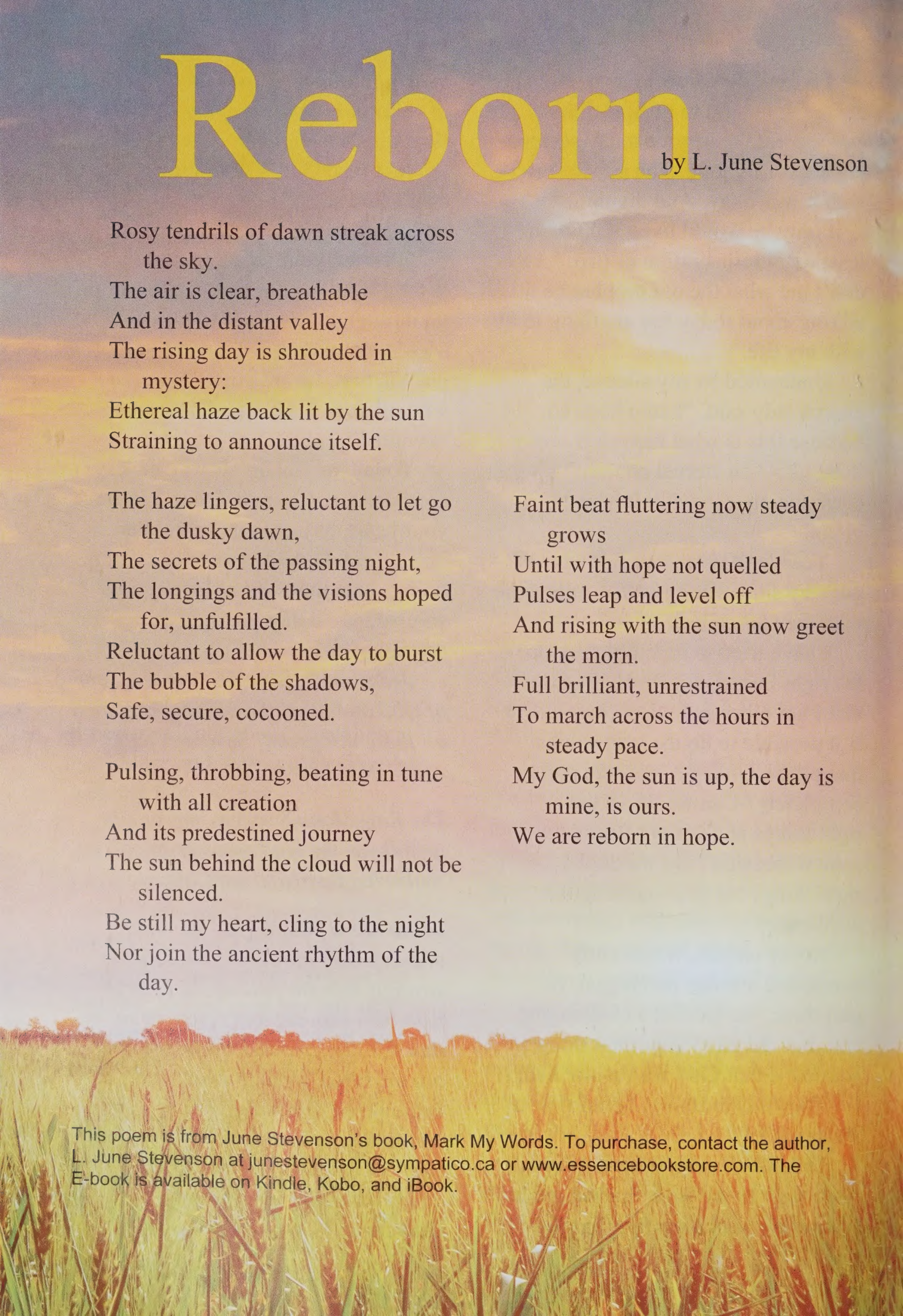
As I read God's Word, time and again God says, "I don't want your religion. I don't want your sacrifices. I don't want your religious festivals. What I want is your heart. Just don't go through the motions to please Me. I want your heart, I want you to put Me first. I want you to love me with all your heart, mind soul and strength."

Today, as you go about your day, consider this question: Does God have your heart, or just your "religious" obedience? Perhaps you need to stop doing some things in order to make sure you are doing the right things for the right reasons.

Jesus said "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and then all these things will be added unto you." (Matthew 6:3)

The Rev. Mona Scrivens serves joyfully as the lead minister at Amberlea Presbyterian Church.

Mona has a passion for the family, of every configuration. She believes strongly that the role of the Church is to be a support and resource so that families and individual members are nurtured, strengthened, and empowered to honour God in their homes and in the whole of their lives. She will be one of the preachers at The Presbyterian Women's Gathering.



Reborn

by L. June Stevenson

Rosy tendrils of dawn streak across the sky.
The air is clear, breathable
And in the distant valley
The rising day is shrouded in mystery:
Ethereal haze back lit by the sun
Straining to announce itself.

The haze lingers, reluctant to let go the dusky dawn,
The secrets of the passing night,
The longings and the visions hoped for, unfulfilled.
Reluctant to allow the day to burst
The bubble of the shadows,
Safe, secure, cocooned.

Pulsing, throbbing, beating in tune with all creation
And its predestined journey
The sun behind the cloud will not be silenced.
Be still my heart, cling to the night
Nor join the ancient rhythm of the day.
Faint beat fluttering now steady grows
Until with hope not quelled
Pulses leap and level off
And rising with the sun now greet the morn.
Full brilliant, unrestrained
To march across the hours in steady pace.
My God, the sun is up, the day is mine, is ours.
We are reborn in hope.

This poem is from June Stevenson's book, Mark My Words. To purchase, contact the author, L. June Stevenson at junestevenson@sympatico.ca or www.essencebookstore.com. The E-book is available on Kindle, Kobo, and iBook.

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Easter Service: He Walked Ahead

by Rick Fee

Suggested Hymn:

262 Come to us, beloved Stranger
263 They Set Out
665 Lord Jesus, you shall be my song
654 O God of Bethel
641 One More Step
675 Precious Lord, Take My Hand *

Note from the author:

Easter, like life, is a journey, a walk, a pilgrimage. From Jesus' ministry among the hills of Galilee, to the painful walk along the Via Dolorosa, to the two disciples walking to Emmaus, to the apostles' journeys spreading out from Jerusalem, walking, trekking, making a pilgrimage has been part and parcel of our Christian faith. Indeed, all faiths seem to include aspects of travelling to sacred sites, moving beyond our home comfort and reaching out in search of enlightenment, re-creation, renewal, and regeneration. One year ago, I made a pilgrimage to the "Camino de Compostela" in Spain. There are many routes one

could choose, along more than 4,000 km of pathways which all meet in Santiago de Compostela, Spain. This worship service draws upon that experience.

Preparation:

Prior to worship, it would be beneficial for those gathering to recall, personally or in a group setting, what journeys, trips, vacations, hikes, or pilgrimages they have taken. Ask yourselves, or the entire group, which events have contributed to their understanding of deeper meaning in their own lives and the lives of their friends and family, and how God uses special moments to give us inspiration and discernment.

Call to Worship:

> All of humanity has been called with the Creator's message of reconciliation, love, and peace. The whole of creation is within the loving and protective embrace of the Creator of the universe.
>
> Those of us assembled to worship this day have been chosen as Disciples of Jesus, who trekked the Galilean hills, sharing His message of abiding and

eternal love. We have heard that message and have responded to the call to carry that message wherever we may travel, and share it with those we meet along the Way.

Draw us together in this time of worship as disciples, as fellow pilgrims (pelegrinos), who seek to walk faithfully all of the days of our lives, sharing acceptance, compassion, understanding, love, and a sincere welcome. Be with us as we worship you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Opening Prayer:

Creating, Redeeming, and Sustaining God, there are those among us who have just begun this journey of life. We long to experience the fullness of life and the beauty of all of creation.

We gaze at a world of possibilities and strive to learn more day by day. There are others among us who have experienced your sustaining hand through many of life's challenges and trials and days of celebration and joy. We have enjoyed the pathways chosen and have seen beauty and growth in our journey. We have gathered lilacs in the springtime and cherished friends returning from their own journeys.

There are others among us who have the accumulated wisdom of many years and who look upon life in its fullness. We have seen history, we have endured difficult times, and we have marvelled at progress and at human regress. Our pilgrimage is long and our destinations have been many and we give thanks for all things.

Lord God, in all seasons of life, we acknowledge that you have created us as unique beings. You have redeemed us for your purpose and you sustain us daily as we walk the pathways chosen. Above all, we give thanks for the times when we have seen our Lord walking just ahead of us, beckoning us onward into light and along more gentle and fulfilling pathways.

We pray this prayer of thanks in Jesus' Name. Amen.

Scripture: Read Luke 24:13–35 (NRSV)

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened.

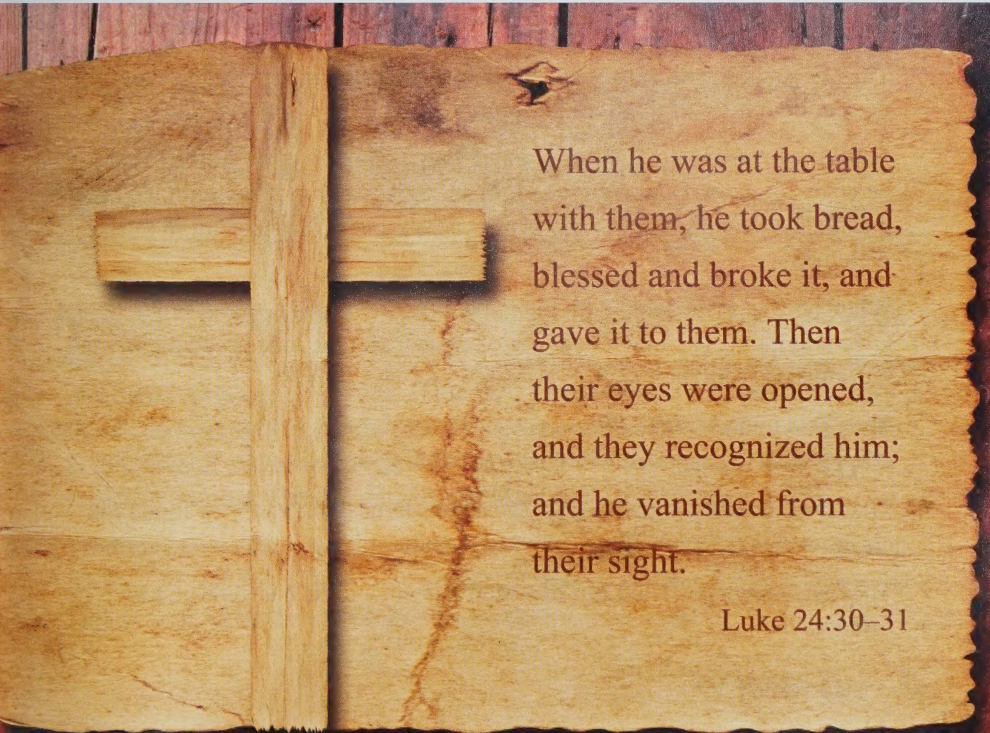
While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him.

And he said to them, “What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?” They stood still, looking sad.

Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?”

He asked them, “What things?” They replied, “The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.”

Then he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?”



When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight.

Luke 24:30–31

HE IS RISEN

> They said to each other,
> "Were not our hearts burning
> within us while he was
> talking to us on the road,
> while he was opening the
> scriptures to us?"

Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." So he went in to stay with them.

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight.

They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?"

That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together.

They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!"

> Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Reflection:

Listen the words of the Rev. Rick Fee as he reflects on his journey:

> On April 29, 2016, I was awarded a *Compostellae* (certificate) after walking 311 km from Leon to Santiago, Spain. (It was really about 374 but who was counting?) It was awarded to *Ricardum Willelmum Fee* and written entirely in Latin. The route my college friend and I had mapped out took us through rain, sleet, snow, quagmire, and dark of night over mountain top, through scenic valley, industrial wastelands, and charming villages. This is commonly referred to as "*El Camino*." Thousands of pilgrims (pelegrinos) trek various routes commencing in Holland, Italy, Germany, Belgium, England, France, Switzerland, or Portugal every year, all ultimately reaching the Cathedral in Santiago de Compostela where the Apostle, Saint James the Great, is supposedly buried.
>
> This is "The Way," the pilgrimage, the Camino de Compostello, The Way of St James. Van Goethe said that Europe was created by The Way of St James. It is a pilgrimage—a time to walk, think, reflect, and meet others. It was most popular from the 11th to the 13th centuries. It was rediscovered in the 20th century. In 1987, "The Way" was declared a UNESCO cultural event. It is right out of Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales." It is social, recreational, sport, religious.
>
> A few years ago, I read *The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry* by Rachel Joyce. It is a British novel about a man who receives a letter from a woman he had known 20 years earlier and not seen since. She has cancer and will die shortly.
>
> He writes her a letter saying he is sorry to hear this news. He sets out to post the letter. But, going to the post box, he feels his words are inadequate so he just keeps walking. At the end of the day, he phones his wife to inform her that he has decided to hand deliver the letter and she should not wait for him at dinner. But, she says, that is a 600 km walk. Nonetheless, he sets out and the story unfolds. The pilgrimage unfolds.
>
> Walking alone every day, his mind stretches back and touches many issues in his life. At one stage the author writes, "*If he kept looking at things that were bigger than himself, he knew he would make it to Berwick.*"

Over the next days and weeks his story is spread. His reflections about the pilgrimage and his life challenge him and those around him. His wife is confused and upset, questioning and feeling vulnerable, then supportive and urging him onward. Journalists take up the story and follow his progress. Advertisers try to cash in. People give him food and money. His body gives out and his mind gives in. Some say it is a religious journey; but, to that, he reflects, "*He wished no one had mentioned religion. He didn't object to other people believing in God, but it was like being in a place where everyone knew a set of rules and he didn't.*"

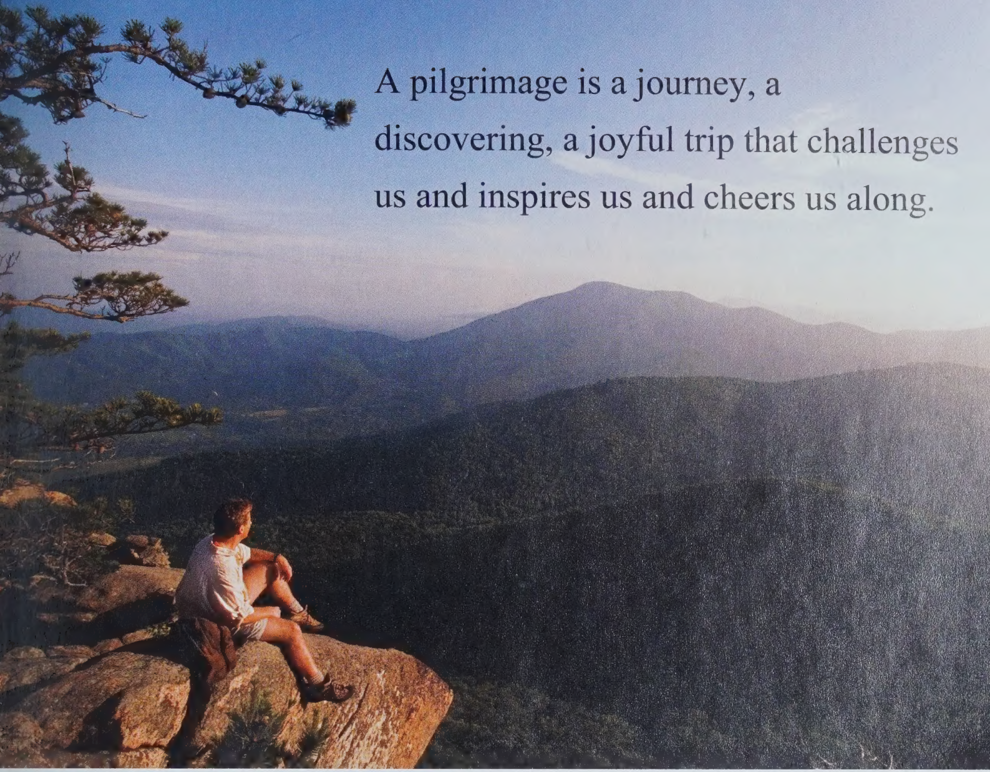
Then several people decide to join him and a motley crew takes form—including a dog. "*He understood that in walking to atone for the mistakes he had made, it was also his journey to accept the strangeness of others.*"

The people who joined Harold on his pilgrimage were both a blessing and a curse. He wanted to be alone, yet, he had started out saying there were no rules and he had to go along to see what it all meant. "*He was in it now with these other people. After all, they had suffered too in different ways. No matter how much he regretted their decision to join him, it was not in Harold's nature to let his companions down. He reminded himself there were no rules to his walk. He had been guilty once or twice of believing he understood, only to discover he did not. Maybe it was the same with the pilgrims? Maybe they were the next part of the journey? There were times, he saw, when not knowing was the biggest truth, and you had to stay with that.*"

Harold Fry was wrenched from a life of placid comfort and conformity, a life of routine, rut, and ruin. He was thrust painfully into a life of reflection, renewal, and regeneration; into a life of communication with his fellows, even his spouse. He was thrown into a life of advocacy for his friend, which led him into a life transformed by the very journey that he took.

The pilgrimage is almost too much for Harold. It almost does him in. He confronts his demons, his entire life, and the issues of his life. "*For the rest of the afternoon Harold continued to tread the streets without knowing where he was going. He needed someone to share his faith in his walk so that he could believe in it too, but he barely had the energy to talk.*"

When reflective, perhaps we acknowledge the pilgrimage aspect of our lives. We are walking "The Way." We are striving for a common destination. We are sustained by a common faith. We have challenges and concerns. There are blisters. There is exhaustion. There is questioning.



A pilgrimage is a journey, a discovering, a joyful trip that challenges us and inspires us and cheers us along.

Our Christian faith has urged us to walk with others. We are urged to not just walk with others but to imagine, empathize, and enter fully into the journeys of others. We are urged to come together to talk, to share the reason for our pilgrimage, the route we will take, and to encourage companions who join us along the way. The Nobel Laureate and popular folk singer, Bob Dylan, wrote, "*What good am I, if I'm like all the rest; if I just shut myself off so I can't hear you cry. What good am I?*"

About one of Harold's companions on the journey, the author wrote, "*He wished the man would honour the true meaning of words, instead of using them as ammunition.*"

There are many routes. There are many companions. They are all fellow companions created by God. It is God who has placed us together at various stages on this pilgrimage. Perhaps it is our role to point to the Man who appears to be walking ahead of us but who is willing to stop awhile and guide us on that journey. Martin Luther King Jr. wrote, "*We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny.*"

A pilgrimage is a journey, a discovering, a joyful trip that challenges us and inspires us and cheers us along. Life is not easy for many folk. They have challenges and they wrestle with their better nature and their baser self. On our journeys, we are called to encourage others urging all people to strive for their better nature. We do this through families and close friendships and reaching out to strangers. We are called to embrace those who are different, less-abled and those often cast aside by the larger society. John Calvin expressed this sentiment in these words: "*All the blessings we enjoy are committed to our trust that they should be dispensed for the benefit of our neighbors.*"

We share the hope within us that there is someone, who goes before us, who has walked before us, who has shared the pathway of this life before we walked here. That same Resurrected Man, that Jesus of Nazareth, will guide us and our fellow pilgrims as we journey forward in life.

Hymn

Closing Prayer and Blessings

Lord God, protect those of us assembled this day and those who we hold so dearly in our hearts: family and friends. Forgive us our sins, and guard us against pride and despair. Give us the wisdom to do what is right and just. Make us instruments of your will.

Gracious God, you always show mercy toward those whom you love, and you are never far from those who seek you. Be with your servants on their pilgrimages and guide their way in accord with your will. Be a companion for them along their journey, a guide at crossroads, strength in their weariness, defense before dangers, shelter on the way, shade against the heat, light in the darkness, a comforter in their discouragements, and firmness in their intentions. May it be that, through your guidance, they might arrive safely home unscathed at the end of their journeys enriched with graces and virtues. Through Jesus Christ Your Son, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever. AMEN

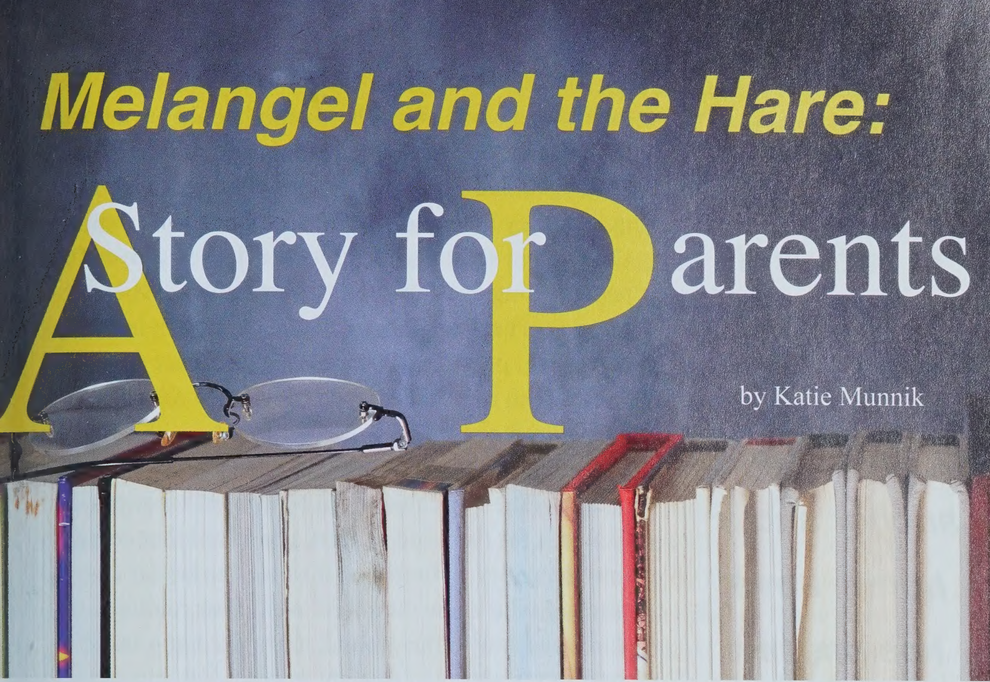
(adapted from the Camino Pilgrim Blessing)

Rick Fee, who retired last year as General Secretary of the Life and Mission Agency, is a former General Assembly Moderator (2004), Director of Presbyterian World Service and Development (1992–2005), and missionary with The Presbyterian Church of Nigeria (19771992).

Melangel and the Hare:

A Story for Parents

by Katie Munnik



> **“We are shaped by all the stories we tell and all that we share with others.”**

At least two thirds of parenting involves storytelling. Whether it is stories we tell our children or stories we tell ourselves, this is how we fill our days.

Some people say that there are only seven stories in the world and maybe that’s true—I feel like I am forever repeating myself, and half the books in the library seem to be versions of something that I have heard before. And still we turn to stories again and again. Maybe we are looking for that repetition as a structure to help us grow.

Storyteller Ruth Kirkpatrick takes it a step further, suggesting that we seek stories that we can already believe in. She says “We are our stories,”—and that rings true. We are shaped by all the stories we tell and all that we share with others. Of course, as people of faith, we *know* this, but sometimes we come upon stories that can teach us in new ways. As I said before, repetition is good. Here’s one that caught me recently.

Melangell was an Irish princess who lived in the seventh century. When her parents decided to marry her to a local nobleman, she refused, pledging to love Christ alone. Well, her family would have none of that, and they made plans for her wedding feast. Melangell fled across the sea and found refuge in a quiet valley in the north of Wales. For fifteen years, she lived in solitude, spending her days in prayer and never setting eyes on another human being. (I could just pause here for a moment and breathe in her story. A moment of parental peace. Why are there so few stories with a decent episode of *and-she-found-peace-and-quiet?*)

But peace does not last and good stories need conflict. The day came when Melangell sat at prayer, listening for the word of God, and heard fear come into the valley. The closer it came, the harder she listened. She knew the sound well. Fear running fierce and low to the ground, a heart leaping faster than feet, faster than thought towards her, but she kept still, as still as she could manage, seated on the soft ground in prayer.

The fear came close and still closer.

Melangell spoke to her heart and opened her hands. And then she heard the hounds. It took all the Lord's strength to keep her still.

She was certain they had found her at last and certain she would be torn from the valley and returned home in shame. Still the fear came running and she stayed still. Prayer was an anchor, a bedrock, a home.

She heard horses now, too, and men's voices shouting. A hunt approaching, and with her eyes closed, she didn't see the small, brown hare running towards her, and when it leapt onto her spread skirt, she didn't flinch, she didn't move at all. The hounds circled her, waiting for a signal, and the huntsman blew his horn, but no sound emerged. Nothing. A strangeness filled the air and everything now was still.

"Our own foundations in faith and family have given our children an anchor and a home. Love has passed through us and into the world."

The Prince of Powys, Brochwel Yscythrog, came upon his huntsmen and wondered at the strange scene before his eyes. Melangell stood to greet him and when Brochwel heard her story, he was moved, of course, by her story, her strength, and her faith. He gave thanks to God and to Melangell for her witness and he gave her the whole valley to be a sanctuary for all who sought refuge. Melangell founded an abbey there and served for many years as abbess until she died at a good old age. In that area, hares are known as *oen Melangell*—Melangell's lambs.

On first hearing, this feels like a sweet story of nurture. Nurture the little ones. Protect them from harm. Stand up for what is right and you will be blessed. The image of the prayerful, protective mother-figure and the wild, jumping little one is lovely—a little like an old-fashioned take on Good Night Moon.

But stories settle in and tend to change as they put down roots. New meanings push up from the depths and surprises surface. A quiet voice told me that the hare's heart is mine. I have fears that get away from me and they can wildly dash faster than my feet could ever hope to run. I need places of rest and safety just as much as any small one. I need a haven and a hope.

A second read of Melangell's tale reminds me to start at the beginning. Before she could provide sanctuary, she had to need it and to find it. Those fifteen years in the wilderness nurtured her and prepared her for that morning at prayer when she heard fear enter the valley.

And isn't that the story of raising kids? We begin by focussing on meeting needs. We clean, feed, and pray for our children; we teach them right from wrong and how to share and we hope and pray they will grow to be loving, caring, faith-filled kids. The days with little ones are long but the months fly by and soon our kids are walking themselves home from school and making plans of their own. We hope we've got it right and we worry that we haven't done enough but it's time and they are ready so we start finding strength to let them go.

Then somewhere along the way, we realize that we've only been able to nurture them because we were nurtured first. Our own foundations in faith and family have given our children an anchor and a home. Love has passed through us and into the world.

We see this enacted whenever a minister receives the elements of the Lord's Supper, then turns to the congregation to serve. We see it when a child rests on her father's chest, her ear against his heart—just as he once rested on his father's chest, and his father before him and before him all the way back to the beginning of days.

We receive to give.

Shoal Lake 40 and Access to Water

by Justice Ministries

Shoal Lake 40 is an Ojibwa community on Treaty 3 territory. It is in the Eastman Region of Manitoba and the Kenora District of Ontario. Nearly 100 years ago, the city of Winnipeg had depleted local potable water supplies and looked to Shoal Lake to meet future water demand.

The community was located at the mouth of Falcon River on Shoal Lake. In 1914, the community was displaced to a peninsula, away from the water intake site (bound for Winnipeg). This land loss included Ojibwa burial grounds. The peninsula became a man-made island when an aqueduct was built to divert swamp water away from the intake site.

Shoal Lake 40 has lived under a boil water advisory for 18 years. It has 568 residents, of whom 260 live on reserve. The community relies on bottled water trucked in from Kenora. The community does not have access to treated water destined for Winnipeg from Shoal Lake.

Residents rely on a barge to transport all supplies, including water. In the winter months, residents drive across the frozen lake. In spring and fall, residents are often stranded on the island. The ice cannot support a vehicle's weight but is too thick for the barge to break up.

Shoal Lake 40 spends $1,000 per person per year on barge and water costs. Winnipeg, for comparison, spends approximately $300 per person per year for water from Shoal Lake. The barge is aging and has broken down. Each time this happens, a state of emergency is called, causing dire situations for medical and basic services. People have fallen through the ice trying to cross the lake and some have drowned.

Why is this important to The Presbyterian Church in Canada?

Cecilia Jeffrey Residential School, run by The PCC from its opening in 1902 to 1969, was located near the Shoal Lake community. Many members of the community attended Cecilia Jeffrey school.

The church is dedicated to walking with Indigenous people toward reconciliation. After years of advocating by the community, municipal, provincial and federal governments are building a road connecting Shoal Lake 40 to the Trans-Canada highway. This is a positive initiative. But the community remains under a boil water advisory.

What can you do?

Water is a gift from God. Access to clean, safe drinking water is a right most Canadians take for granted. There are more than 600 First Nations across Canada; 89 have boil water advisories.

Be aware:

- Learn about Shoal Lake 40 http://www.sl40.ca/
- Learn about the situation: https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/06/07/make-it-safe/canadasobligation-end-first-nations-water-crisis
- The Ontario Native Women's Association has produced a toolkit for educators regarding the relationship between Indigenous women and water. http://www.onwa.ca/upload/documents/watercommission-toolkit-final.pdf

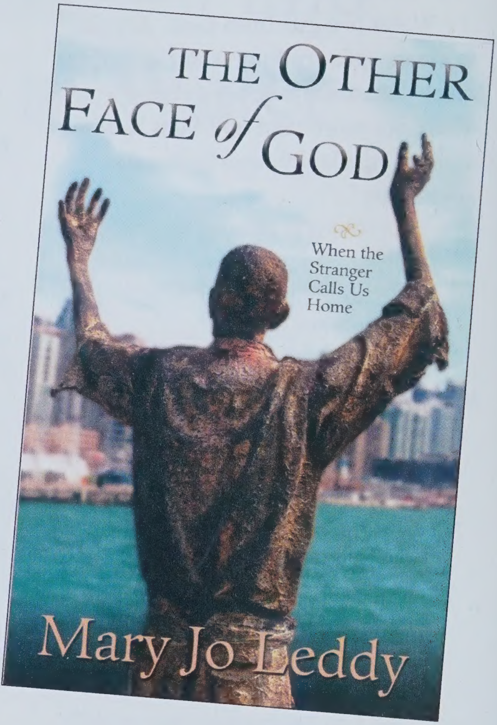
Create awareness:

- Organize or participate in a water walk (http://www.motherearthwaterwalk.com/)

Write to Minister Carolyn Bennett: (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada).

- Ask what the government's plan is to address water advisories in Indigenous communities. Minister Bennett's email: address is Carolyn.bennett@parl.gc.ca. Sample letters are available from Justice Ministries.

Book Review by Colleen Wood



The Other Face of God
written by Mary Jo Leddy
reviewed by Colleen Wood

I have had this book waiting for me for almost a year now. Every time I picked it up I thought, not today, I need something lighter to read today. Well, I am glad I finally picked it up. Although there is great depth and challenge within this book, the writing is so engaging it is hard to put down.

Mary Jo Leddy draws on her over 20-years experience living and working at Romero House in Toronto, a temporary shelter for refugees. Through her writing, she turns strangers, problems, and the 'other', into faces and friends.

It is also a book of miracles. One story is the story of Hidat. She is about to be deported and would likely be taken hostage upon returning to her own country. Not having any idea how to help, Leddy is awakened in the night to listen to the tapes of the hearing. Leddy listen to these tapes and talks about them at a Good Friday walk the next day. At this walk, a lawyer steps up to offer his help. Soon after, Hidat is accepted as a Convention Refugee. Yet, even in the midst of this miracle, we are left wanting. Hidat's husband, whom she had presumed dead, is found to be alive. She is sill waiting, now some 18-years later, for him to join her in Canada. Romera House is a place of miracles, but sometimes miracles take time.

Romero House is an incredibly unique place. It truly exists to welcome the stranger with respect and trust. There are no interior locks on the doors. Through this house, Leddy and volunteer interns, truly gets to know the stranger. She has found that, "Some have a fabulous sense of humour; others are cheats in card games; some are great cooks; and most get out of bed every morning to make sure their kids go to school."

Leddy's ability to share their stories, helps us to also get to know these friends.

Through their stories, we are challenged. We read how the decisions that are made in "the centre of the world" —America, but also in Canada due to our power and geography have affected the lives of refugees. This book challenges our privileges. It challenges our self-centered lives. It also challenges our lifestyle choices. Finally, it challenges our systems, that can make it so hard for honest people, people who will be in danger if they return to their homelands, to settle and work in this country.

This is a book of hope and of struggle. This is a book of faith. This is a book that I wish I had picked up a year ago, especially as my congregation has welcomed one Syrian refugee family within that time and is working to bring another to our community. Mostly, this is a book about following the way, being a good neighbour, and journeying with Christ and his challenging message to love the 'other'. This book encourages us to live a life of joy in a broken world.

I am thankful to Leddy for this challenge and for sharing her story. I am thankful for her being the face of God at Romero House. I am thankful to Leddy for showing me the faith of God in the stranger.

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Mission In Action

International Ministries is excited to have new mission staff for 2017. I know you will enjoy learning more about them, and their mission work, in the months ahead.

Jacqueline Bannerman
Hungary

Jacqueline (Jackie) Bannerman will serve as a Young Adult Intern in Budapest, Hungary, with our longstanding partner, the Reformed Church in Hungary. Jackie graduated in May 2016 from the University of Western with a Bachelor of Arts, Honours, with a specialization in International Relations. During this time, she studied one term at the L'Institut d'Études Politics de Paris.

Jackie

Jackie is excited about this placement with the RCH Kalunba Refugee Ministry. In this ministry, she will be able to combine her interest in hands-on ministry with her desire to help refugees. Jackie hopes to share the recent Canadian experience of welcoming the stranger in her work.

Mission has been a passion for Jackie for several years. She participated in a 2011 mission trip to Winnipeg Inner City Missions in Manitoba, and was a Canada Youth 2012 Mission Track participant. In 2015, Jackie was one of three young adult participants, who attended the 3rd International Conference on Minority Issues in Tokyo, Japan. Delegates from around the world learned about the rise in hate speech against Koreans and other minorities in Japan and created a joint mission statement to address the issue worldwide.

Jackie is a member of Chalmers Presbyterian Church in London, Ontario. Her talents as a Sunday school teacher, summer camp counsellor, and visual technology expert have been appreciated by her congregation.

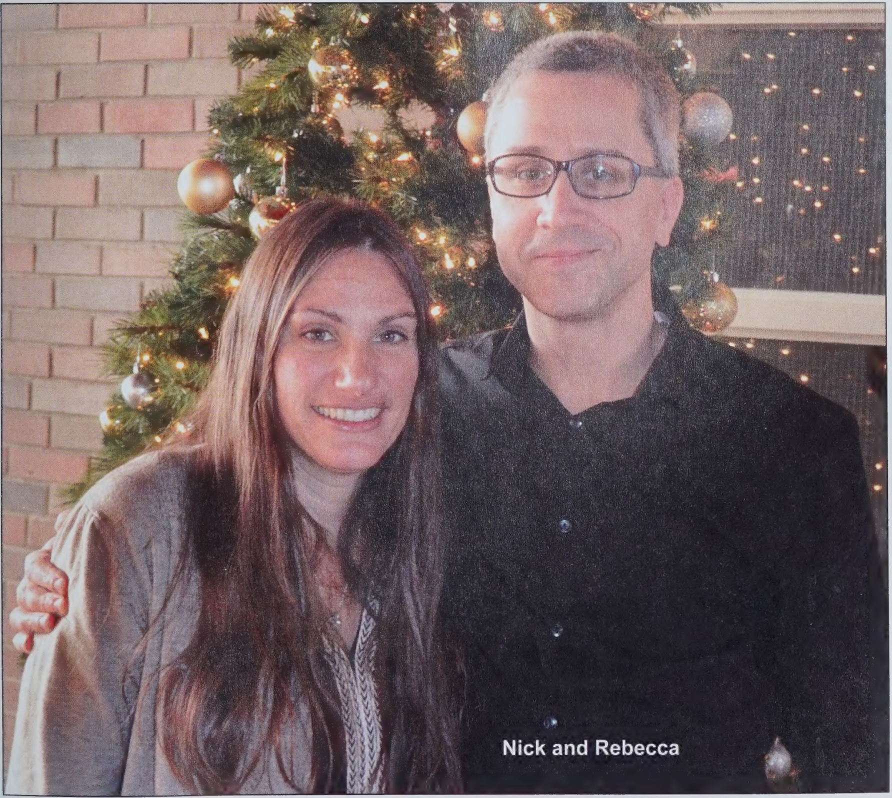
Jackie will be serving in Hungary for eight months and she began her work there on January 1.

Nicholaus Bauman
Nepal

Dr. Nicholaus Bauman has been appointed by International Ministries to work with The United Mission to Nepal for two years. Nick and his wife, Rebecca, and children Silas, Selema, and Freda leave for Nepal on Feb. 13.

They will spend the first six weeks in Kathmandu to learn some Nepali and for general orientation. Then, they will travel to Tansen, a smaller town of 30 000 where they we will be living for the next few years in a Christian community.

Please pray for both the Bauman family and Jackie Bannerman as they begin their ministries.



Nick and Rebecca

HAITI Exposure Tour

Date: November 1–10, 2017 (tentative)

Cost: $2,500 (estimate)

With the help of PWS&D, the WMS is planning an exposure tour to Haiti. The programs you'll visit are working to support vulnerable women and girls and put an end to gender-based violence. You will also see work that is being done to reduce vulnerability to climate change and food insecurity.

While women are largely known as the central pillars of the family and community, they are also frequently vulnerable to sexual violence. A lack of resources, gender power imbalances and widespread poverty severely limit prevention, care and treatment for victims of abuse.

You will visit programs that work in collaboration with local organizations to protect the rights of women and girls and ensure that victims have access to the medical, social, legal, and economic services they need to cope and combat this injustice.

You will also be exposed to awareness campaigns, advocacy, and community education that helps reduce incidents of gender-based violence.

Violence against girls and women is a serious health and human rights issue. You will see how the root causes of this injustice is beeing addressed, how the needs of victims are being meet, and how the program is helping to reduce the risk of gender-based violence for the long-term.

The first 1,000 days of a child's life has huge inpact on brain development and growth. Another project you will visit is targeting families with young children and pregnant women to help prevent acute malnutrition in children under five. The project provides services to malnourished children and supplements to preganat women.

Alongside civil society leaders and local authorities, PWS&D is also working with vulnerable communities to raise awareness of climate change, build resilience to the effects, and increase food security.

In a country where over one million people are food insecure and agricultural production only meets 43% of food needs, this work is more essential than ever.

By teaching about soil conservation, agricultural techniques that require less water, seed and fertilizer, and strengthening solid waste management systems, PWS&D partners are helping address the needs of families and communities for today and for the future. You will be able to witness the work being done.

For more information
contact Alexis McKeown,
amckeown@presbyterian.ca
or 800-619-7301

In the Society

Synodical

Members of the Synodical of **Quebec and Eastern Ontario** met at Knox Church in Manotick for their Fall Rally. After registration and refreshments, Elizabeth Klassen extended a warm welcome on behalf of the church. Peggy Malcolm led Opening Worship and spoke on the theme: Returning to your Roots, using the story of Ruth and her daughters-in-law.

Patricia Grainger, the president, constituted the business meeting with prayer. Among the various items of business, Irene Nesbitt raised the question of the need to update the history of the synodical and asked for each presbyterial to update their own historical records and forward a copy to her. She will take on the task of compiling them, hopefully, for future publication.

Then, WMS President, Susan McLennan, spoke on the theme, Our Roots in Mission. She explained that she was in fact returning to her roots since Knox Manotick was her home church and she shared some of her earlier memories. She also related some of her experiences from her recent trip to Guatemala and then led us into small groups for discussions of the changes that have been made as to how we do mission. The highlights of each small discussion were then shared with all at the meeting. Susan was thanked for her excellent presentation and also for her dedicated work as our president.

After an excellent lunch prepared by the ladies of the church, and a short sing-song led by Sally Stinson, we reconvened to hear a presentation by Janet Stark, an experienced hospital Chaplain and author of an excellent Pastoral Care Training Manual. The afternoon passed all too quickly as Janet spoke of the attitudes that are needed to provide love and care for the older members of our society—the support that is so important for them, and how to lookout for signs of elder abuse—all interspersed with intervals of fun as Janet also admits to being a recognized ‘clown’. Her talk was both interesting and informative and provided insight into one of the most troubling issues of our times.

Prior to the closing of the meeting, Patricia gave updates on some of the happenings at the national level, with emphasis on the upcoming Women’s Gathering in May 2017, and the importance of the website, The Hub, as a means of connecting through social media. She then closed the meeting with Prayer.

Presbyterial

Maitland Presbyterial met for their Fall Rally at Molesworth

Presbyterian Church in Molesworth on October 3 celebrating the theme, A Tisket, A Tasket, God has filled my Blessing Basket. Betty Mitchell welcomed us and then, the president of the local group, invited guests to share in the Fall desserts prepared by the Molesworth members.

Then the Mitchell group led a hymn sing and Presbyterial President, Mary Simmons, constituted the meeting. The Rev. Mark McLennan, moderator of the Synod of Southwestern Ontario, and Mrs. Susan McLennan, President of the WMS, brought greetings. Sarah Buchannan thanked the ladies for sponsoring her for a week at Camp Kintail. Then, Lenore Armstrong and Mary Douma led a meaningful worship service on the theme.

Following worship, President Susan McLennan shared pictures and stories of women she met on her mission exposure trip to Guatemala last Fall. This is the WMS Together We Can! project that is making such an incredible difference for families and communities in Guatemala. They are improving their agricultural practices, growing a variety of fruits, vegetables, and protein-rich beans, which are all having a healthy nutritional impact on them. Youth and children are learning to plant vegetable gardens that help the children learn about nutrition, responsible consumption, and environmental stewardship. Young women are raising their voices to advocate for food security and environmental protection. New ideas and training are improving their lives.

An offering for the WMS was received as well as donations to the Salvation Army Food Bank in Listowel, and donations for the Margaret Mowbray sewing machines at the Moma Hope Dress Shop in Kisumu, Kenya.

Judy Watt thanked everyone for their participation in the evening and Betty Johnson closed the meeting in prayer.

~Lorrain Clugston

London Presbyterial held their Mission Day on October 20 at Argyle Crinan Presbyterian Church. The Crinan ladies welcomed everyone with refreshments, and after registration and a sing-a-long, President Valerie

Shaw welcomed everyone. Spreading the Word was the theme with a focus on Matthew 9:35–38.

After the roll call and reports, Brenda Patterson, our guest speaker, spoke about her mission work in El Salvador. As she talked, she showed examples of weaving, clothing, cooking pots, and bowls and aprons from El Salvador. Brenda, and her husband the Rev. Jim Patteron, have been instrumental in setting up the Otre-Fe food security program in El Salvador. Patterson showed pictures of their involvement in building houses, stoves, and chicken coops. The Otre-Fe program is community-driven with materials and labour purchased there.

After the speaker, Knox St. Thomas WMS led the worship service. Marion Orchard read Psalm 92 and gave everyone a folded piece of paper. All opened their papers and together read, Our God is an Awesome God! We then sang Jesus loves me, while Marion, with assistants Lydia and Margie, read a devotional and scripture. This was followed by all reading their papers again, and Marion finishing with: Who Goes with us All!.

The day closed with courtesies, a delicious lunch, and prayer.

~Elaine Brown

Local

Memorial

Isabel McRae passed away at the age of 108 on September 14, 2016.

Isabel was born into a WMS home, her mother being a charter member of First Presbyterian WMS, and was a faithful WMS member herself. She would be seen, half frozen, pushing her walker through four inches of snow, the six long blocks from her home to a WMS meeting when over 100-years-old, because a taxi she ordered had failed to pick her up. She was treasurer of her local WMS, Presbyterial, and Synodical for many years, urging locals to fulfil their allocation.

Her church and faith were very important to Isabel, and if she missed a Sunday she was very upset. Isabel never married but began her teaching career at the Presbyterian School in Vegerville. She continued to teach at both the elementary and high school level.

On one occasion Isabel mentioned she felt she was not living as a true Christian. No Isabel, you lived your faith and followed in your Master's footsteps. You were an example to all. You are and will be missed.

When submitting an article for In the Society, focus on the new and interesting to help engage a variety of readers. What was one new thing you learned from the speaker? Did you try something new? Was there a record turn out? Good quality photos can also be used.

Remembering

Helene Norwood
Dr. Margaret Strang
Auxilliary First
Presbyterian
Chatham ON

Adeline Jack
Erskine WMS
Dundalk ON

Agnes McCrea
St. Andrew's
Presbyterian Women
St. Andrew's Church
Sarnia ON

Sheila Henderson
Nora Seaton Group
Paterson Memorial
Sarnia ON

Queenie McBean
Past president of
Sarnia Presbyterial

Jean Catherine
Deverill
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Marguerite Aitken
Campbell-Afternoon
Aux.
Knox Church
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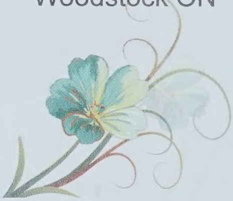

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Mission Awareness Sunday

Resource is Available

April 30, 2017

Theme: *Inspired*

by Rev. Joel Sherbino

The worship resource for Mission Awareness Sunday has been emailed out. If you have not received the material got to www.wmspcc.ca/mission-awareness-sunday or email amckeown@presbyterian.ca (the resource can be emailed or mailed out).

Work in Partnership

Be Overwhelmed

Make a Difference

Get INSPIRED

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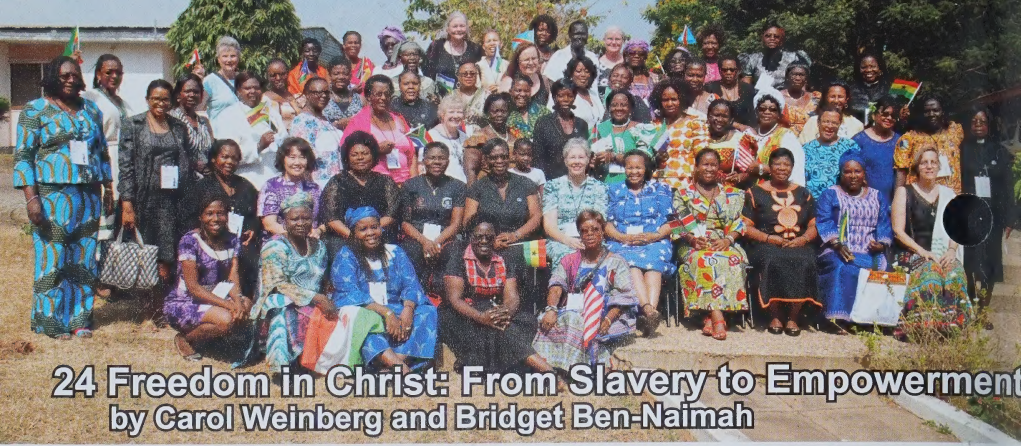
Please report any errors/changes in address

Glad Tidings

May/June 2017



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Glad Tidings
May/June 2017
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Glad Tidings reports on aspects of the Women's Missionary Society on all levels. *Glad Tidings* challenges concerned Christians to reflect on their faith through articles and reports related to mission and social justice issues, locally, nationally, and internationally. *Glad Tidings* through its content, encourages readers to become informed, educated, inspired, and motivated to action. *GladTidings* provides a forum for a broad spectrum of opinion and information, thus the views expressed in features, news reports, letters, and book reviews are not necessarily endorsed by the WMS or by the Editor.

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Editorial

I came across a term recently—Holy huddle. Basically, likeminded Christians tend to hang out together. The more I thought about this, the more I agreed with it. It is certainly true in my own life. Almost all of my closest friends are Christians and many of us even share similar views.

And the Holy huddle is a beautiful thing. This past Sunday, a small group from my church gathered into a football-like huddle to pray for a friend in need. We wanted to support these close friends through prayer. Hopefully our huddles support us, challenge us, and keep us accountable. I do believe it is great to have a strong group of supportive Christians in your life. However, I hope that your Holy huddle isn't your life. Holy huddles should equip you to reach outward.

For example, in this edition of *Glad tidings*, you will read about a church that began a walking and running group. Together, they are supporting one another, sharing their faith, and reaching out to others. Their Holy huddle has expanded beyond their church walls to invite in others with an interest in learning to walk or run.

The study this month also focuses on a group that supports and encourages one another. You will read stories from African Presbyterian and Reformed women leaders. They come together every three years to gather, share, and support one another. Their huddle is a time to share about the injustices women face within their own countries. Together, they journey beyond their gathering, to make a difference. I pray that this study will inform you and help you to walk in solidarity with them. Through their words, you can join their Holy huddle.

Our article on Urban Monks is another story of like-minded Christians who gather. They gather to support one another, but also to reach out to their community.

It is good to be in a Holy huddle. It is good to have Christians to share with, learn from, and be with. However, we must also leave our Holy huddle. Equipped and encouraged to serve, we must go out and share our faith, speak out against injustices, and dialogue with others.

RUNNING WITH GOD

by Ruth McCowan

"...since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

Hebrews 12:1

In January 2016, we began offering a running training program from our church for people, who had little to no running experience, but wanted to get off the couch and run their first race. Like many Churches, we are surrounded by running stores, which offer good training programs. So, what made us think we had anything new or different to offer that wasn't already being done?

The twist for us was the above scripture. Our training offers the principles of running, just like all the other running programs but it also offers an opportunity for people to come and hear inspirational stories of the faith and to share how we run the race that is marked out for us in our daily lives. This is not just a regular running program. It is part of our outreach into our community. It's a connecting point to people in our community, who may never otherwise venture through our doors.

Participants are challenged from the onset to write down their goals and what they would like to accomplish during these 14 weeks. Perhaps that will be learning to run at a certain interval pace or distance. Over the course of the study, it may be learning more about nutrition or how the things we consume affect our daily lifestyle. However, it may also be a spiritual goal like adding a spiritual discipline to their daily life or learning how to have a closer relationship with God. Their goal might even be to find out what it means to be a Christian.

For anyone who has ever set out to learn a new skill like running or competitive walking, you will know the importance of finding your own pace and carving out time to practise in your already busy schedule. Often, we get discouraged because we don't think we're fast enough or good enough. You need to learn early on that it doesn't matter how fast or how slow one goes if you are out there doing it.

In the same way, in our daily lives there will be challenges. My challenge will not be the same as yours, but we can support each other and celebrate each other's successes. Each week, the participants discover that it is a little easier than it was the week before. Before long, we are discovering we are doing longer distances and running stronger than we were just a short time ago. This is one time where it is important to look back at what you were doing, to see how much you are accomplishing now. Without looking back, sometimes we miss the strides of forward accomplishment.

Each week, I always begin with the same question to the group, "What were your challenges and successes this week?" At first, the answer to that question will be related to the task of learning to run or getting out and walking, but gradually the participants

begin to relate their answers to their spiritual journey as well.

This 14-week program is based on training three days a week, so the first day of each week is our study day, followed by our run or walk. Days two and three are optional days for getting together. Some gather together, some run on their own or with a friend. I find it is always easier to do your homework with a buddy. Knowing that you have someone counting on you makes it easier to get out the door. It's much easier to make an excuse when you are doing it on your own (well, that it my experience anyway). As in most cases, it is hard to commit to any program for three days a week so for those people who can only come once a week, I try to connect and encourage the participants through email (little messages of encouragement) or through our private Facebook group.

The act of beginning a running or regular walking program may be a bit overwhelming for some. At the beginning, we start very slowly. I

Isn't that how it is in life? We take one step at a time "with our eyes fixed on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Hebrews 12:2

ask, "Do you think you can run for 30 seconds, if so, then you can do this." On day one of the week, you will begin running for 30 seconds and walking for four and a half minutes. Each week, the running time gradually increases and the walking portion decreases until by the end of the program, our athletes (because that is who they are) will be doing running intervals of ten minutes running and one minute walking.

From the start, we have also encouraged walkers (and Nordic Pole Walkers) to be a part of this program. Whether people decide to run or walk, the important part is just to move away from the couch and gain a more active lifestyle, grow stronger in their faith, and be part of a community. For some, they will commit to doing their first 5K and for others they will go on to do their first 10K. Others may decide not to do the races, but to just enjoy the training part and become more fit.

One of the important parts of this program is to believe that they can do what before they thought was impossible. That little word "CAN" becomes critical. In Philippians 4:13, we read *"I can do all things through him who strengthens me."* We learn to rely on God in our weakness and we learn that when we are out training it is a good time to talk to God and to praise God every step of the way.

When you look at the pictures of our group, you will see that we are just ordinary people and we come in different shapes, sizes, and ages. If we can do it, anyone can do it…one step at a time…to the finish…and then to the next finish. Isn't that how it is in life? We take one step at a time.

A Mom's Getaway

Finding time for rest

by Amy MacLachlan

About a year ago, I was interviewing the director of Crieff Hills Community Retreat and Conference Centre, and mentioned that I would love to attend a retreat for moms with young children at Crieff. His reply? "Well, start planning one!"

And so I did.

"Rest, Renew, and Relax" took place on January 14-15 at Crieff Hills, a beautiful retreat centre just south of Guelph, owned by The Presbyterian Church in Canada. The expansive property was donated years ago by Col. J.B. Maclean (being the good Presbyterian that he was), of *Maclean's* magazine and is now used by all sorts of groups, both church and non-church.

"Crieff Hills wants to offer opportunities for people at all stages of their lives to take some time apart in a natural setting," said Fiona van Wissen, program coordinator, who helped plan the event. "For moms of young children, I see it as a chance to set aside the constant busyness for a short time, to connect with their spiritual life, and share experiences with others who understand."

A small group of women gathered at Crieff and were led by the Rev. Kristine O'Brien, minister at Trafalgar Presbyterian Church in Oakville, ON. Herself the mother of four children, O'Brien blogs at bloomingreverend.com, where she writes about her gardening adventures and on learning to stop and smell the roses.

She was the perfect choice to help us rest and reflect, and to remember that God loves us fully. O'Brien invited us to find our breath; to be in the moment; to take time for God; to realize that we, as mothers especially, need to take time for self-care. She shared the story of Jesus healing the woman who was bleeding (Mark 5), using it as a metaphor for a mom's life. "It was a wonderful event of healing," she told us. "It was life-changing for that woman and her family. But something else happened. Jesus felt energy leave him. He loved and he healed, but it cost him something."

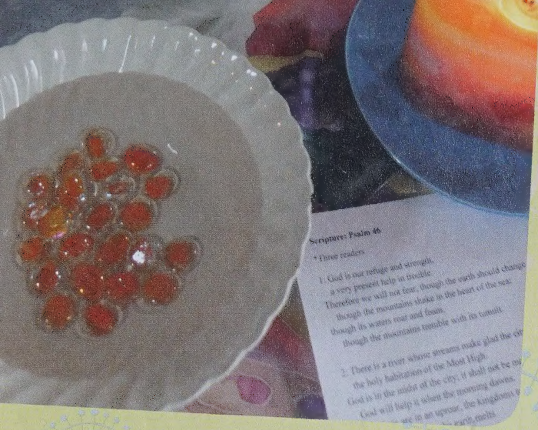
Such is the love and life of a mother. As mothers, particularly in the midst of the craziness of life with young children, we sometimes forget that all the giving we do for other people is, yes, wonderful, but it costs us something in return.

"I have four children who are now teenagers but I remember vividly how much I longed for rest when they were very young," O'Brien told me. "I knew this retreat would offer women the opportunity to be quiet and listen for God's voice, give and receive encouragement from one another, and maybe a good night's sleep!"

O'Brien also reminded us of Ecclesiastes 3—where there is a time for everything in life, including rest. She had us share with each other why we are so tired; and she then spoke to us about keeping Sabbath in a way that fits into our lives. "Sabbath can be observed in all kinds of ways," she told us. "It could be a half day, an hour, a moment. To observe Sabbath is to have time set aside… to intentionally do nothing except inhale."

She said we have to notice when our lives are out of balance; when we are only exhaling (or expending energy) and not inhaling (resting).

"I wanted to come to the retreat because I have a toddler and a pre-schooler at home and I needed a break for the sake of my sanity," said Allie Hyndman, a member of Paris



Presbyterian Church in Paris, ON. "The topic of rest was especially appealing to me."

"The busy world creates very high standards for mothers," said O'Brien—and, I would argue, for all of us—"and places little value on replenishment and renewal."

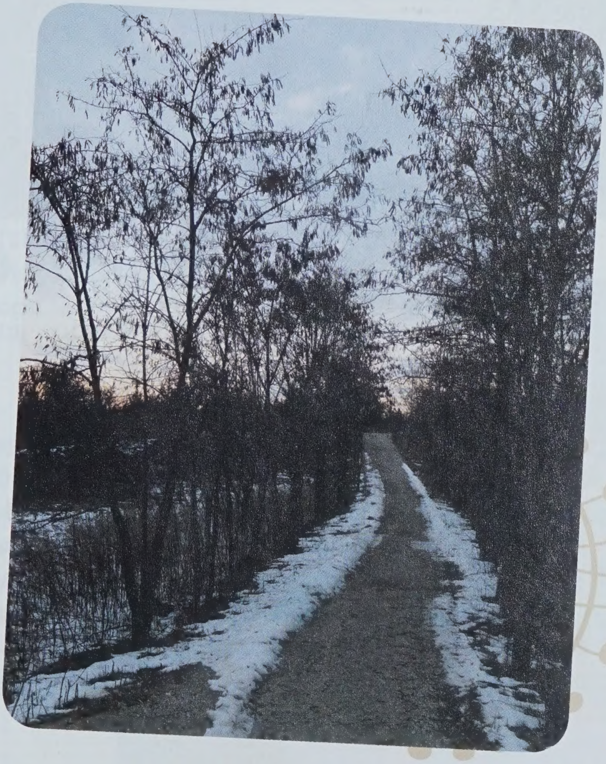
Wayne Muller's book, *Sabbath: Finding rest, renewal, and delight in our busy lives* was a fitting reference for our weekend, though his message applies to anyone whose life seems hectic and out of balance. "Jesus, for whom anything was possible, did not offer 'seven secret coping strategies' to get work done faster, or 'nine spiritual stress management techniques' to enhance our effectiveness," read O'Brien. "Instead, he offered the simple practice of rest as a natural, nourishing, and essential companion to our work."

To help us find this rest, we practised breathing and praying; we walked the stone labyrinth in the dark; we made finger labyrinths, and then sat on our own and slowly traced the lines we had drawn, breathing deeply or repeating a word or phrase or question in our head. We also had time for yoga—led by Amy Donais, a registered yoga teacher trained in the practice of Christian yoga. We enjoyed a movie night, and quiet walks along the trails at Crieff. We also wrote our own morning blessing—something that had meaning for each of us, and could be read each day before leaping into work mode.

"Every parent needs to remember that they themselves are a beloved child of God," said van Wissen, a message O'Brien reminded us of during worship.

Amy MacLachlan was managing editor at the Presbyterian Record until it ceased publication in November 2016. She has two daughters, and is currently a freelance writer and classroom volunteer.

> Like a path through the forest, Sabbath creates a marker for ourselves so, if we are lost, we can find our way back to our center.
>
> ~Wayne Muller



Crieff Hills is planning a similar event in February 2018.

URBAN MONKS

Victoria BC's Emmaus Community

Seeking Lives of Prayer, Presence, and Simplicity

by Rob Crosby-Shearer

It's 7:45 a.m. and a small group of people come from the four directions to pray in Victoria BC's, Fernwood neighbourhood. Anywhere from a half dozen to a dozen people congregate each weekday in the parlour-turned-chapel of this historic house.

Those gathering range in age from their mid-30s to mid-60s and are women and men, lay and ordained. Sometimes their children wander in and out as well. After a bell is rung, there is a time of confession and gratitude, a chanted psalm, another scripture reading, some silence, sharing scripture, a time for spoken prayer, and perhaps a song or two.

It could all be seen as monastic prayer for non-monastics. Those gathered are part of the Emmaus (pronounced 'ah-may-us') Community.

Taking their name from the story told in Luke's Gospel about sharing a meal with the resurrected Jesus—the touchstones of hospitality, studying scripture, and meeting the risen Christ in 'the breaking of the bread' found in that scripture are important to this so-called 'neo-monastic' community. Though common prayer and worship are at the root of all of Emmaus' activities, it would be a mistake to see this as a strictly contemplative community.

As part of their monastic ethos, members of Emmaus have a Rule of Life which involves taking 'vows' of prayer, presence, and simplicity, which they regard as akin to the more traditional monastic vows of 'poverty, chastity, and obedience'. Taking a weekly Sabbath, attending to prayer regularly, and having a spiritual director are some of the elements of that rule.

While the prayer and simplicity vows are somewhat self-explanatory, 'presence' is a bit trickier to get one's head around. The community believes that presence ultimately involves time with God and with each other, and being sent out into their home neighbourhood to 'come alongside what God is already doing there'.

In an age where many people chose to travel to a worshipping community away from where they live, presence in the neighbourhood is important to Emmaus. Accordingly, members live within the house (which includes the chapel and three suites), or rent or purchase housing within a 15–20 minute walk of it. The community dreams of one day erecting a larger 'Abbey' to build on this emerging model, which could be a place of radical hospitality.

Many of the churches have left this neighbourhood in the last 50 years—and our community sees itself as but one way to 're-seed' a Christian presence in BC's post-Christendom and very secular context—albeit in a different way than the past.

It's common for people from the neighbourhood to either leave a prayer, or, in the case of some folks who are street-involved, to come

by for a community meal, or just for conversation or support. The community even partners with a nearby church to host a weekly drop-in time of coffee and conversations with a diverse group of people.

Small, committed, passionate, and Christ-centred: these are a few ways one might describe Emmaus. Since its founding several years ago, Emmaus has started a small neighbourhood worshipping community (appropriately called 'The Abbey Church') that worships in a community centre in the neighbourhood square, has hosted interns in partnership with a neighbourhood urban farm, and started a small, grassroots beverage collective, which brews Kombucha tea and even Trappist-style Belgian beer to support the common life of the community.

Emmaus is ecumenical. Though officially supported by the Anglican and United Churches, Emmaus welcomes baptised Christians of 'all stripes' to discern membership within the community. They seek to engage in a monastic heritage, while hoping to involve all the living streams of the Christian faith.

Members go through a formation process which lasts about a year, which involves learning about the 'Marks of a New Monasticism', sharing each others' stories, while participating in the common life of the community. This includes prayer, open meals, meeting with another community member a couple of times a month on a rotating basis, and other ways of being present in the neighbourhood.

Though the community is young, its roots go deep. It was in 1935 that Dietrich Bonheoffer wrote:

> "The restoration of the church will surely come only from a new type of monasticism which has nothing in common with the old but a complete lack of compromise in a life lived in accordance with the Sermon on the Mount in the discipleship of Christ."

I think it is time to gather people together to do this. The latest wave of new or neo-monasticism began when post-evangelicals, inspired by Bonhoeffer's idea, gathered in North Carolina in the early 2000s and crafted 12 Marks of a New Monasticism.

Emmaus sees itself in a lineage which includes that group, as well as earlier incarnations, such as the Iona Community in Scotland (founded by Presbyterian minister, the Rev. George McLeod), Reba Place Fellowship in the USA, the Taize Community in France, and the Catholic Worker Movement. It also traces its roots back through the various expressions of monastic life throughout Christian history—stretching back to St. Francis and St. Clare, St. Benedict, and the Desert Mothers and Fathers.

Emmaus is still young.

It started about three years ago, and is deliberately slow in building as it seeks a sustainable base. Though we have received some start-up grants, part of our hope is to grow 'according to our means'. This takes patience and isn't always flashy.

So far, 10 people have gone through the 'novice' process and become 'covenanted' members, while there are several others who have chosen to be 'companions'. That is, those who live in the spirit of the Emmaus' Rule of Life, though not necessarily in the neighbourhood.

Covenanted members live in or near the neighbourhood and are part of the 'Chapter', a monastic term for the decision-making body which meets monthly and makes decisions using a consensus model. Covenanted Members currently range in age from their 30s to their 90s.

Along the walls of the Emmaus Community chapel are prayers which are collected from a prayer box on their fence, as well as those collected at their worship in our Abbey Church each Sunday.

There are prayers about bad landlords, a parent dying of cancer, and a person struggling for hope. This morning, prayers are spoken for the neighbourhood—its schools, businesses, and people; for the world; and for other individuals who have specifically asked the community to pray for them. As we pray, a math teacher from a nearby high school bikes by on his way to work. One of the members prays for him by name; one of the benefits of praying and seeking to be present where you live.

Could Bonhoeffer have been correct in his bold assertion about the renewal of the Church that he made so many years ago? Could neo-monastics like the Emmaus Community be one of the ways the Holy Spirit is breathing new life into God's Church in this time of uncertainty and change?

Only time will tell.

For now, Emmaus is content not to worry too much about that big picture, but to faithfully pray and seek to live into small acts of presence with God and with each other in the neighbourhood; seeking to be a witness to God's love and grace while it embraces ancient rhythms in an ever-changing world.

Rob Crosby-Shearer is Co-Prior of The Emmaus Community. For more on The Emmaus Community, please see www.emmauscommunity.ca and www.abbeychurch.ca.

Education for Educators

by Jennifer de Combe

Each year, Christian educators from across North America gather for a time of learning, renewal, and community building. For many participants, this gathering feels very much like coming home to spend time with good friends and fellow educators. This year approximately 20 Canadian educators attended this conference to learn about Christian education in time of chaos and change.

The theme of the Association of Presbyterian Church Educators 2017 conference, *God with us in the Chaos*, resonated deeply with all who were in attendance. As we walked through the halls of the conference center in Denver in late January, the snow-capped mountains and cool winter air were not the only things pressing in on us from outside. The political climate in the United States added a new level of chaos to the everyday challenges we have to navigate.

Much to our surprise, none of the keynote speakers spoke at any length about the political chaos that was dominating the news. Instead, their messages reminded us that, through Christ, we have everything we need to live peaceably, proclaim love, and build the upside-down kingdom of God where light emerges from the chaos of darkness.

"Our God is a God who brings life out of dead things," declared Lutheran pastor and author Nadia Bolz-Weber in her opening plenary. The message of God's constantly renewing presence, ever inviting us into new life, echoed through every aspect of the conference. From creative worship experiences to inspiring education workshops, we were invited to experience the freeing love of a God, who willingly entered into the chaos of life with us through Christ.

When the closing plenary speaker, the Reverend Shannon Johnson Kershner, challenged us to see the generative potential of chaos, we were ready to see it. Not only can chaos prompt us to go deeper in our faith and renew our commitment to following Christ, but it can also provide us with new opportunities as Christians for engaging in the world and loving our neighbours.

Next year's APCE annual conference will be in Louisville, KY, from Jan. 30 to Feb. 4, 2018.The theme is "Deep and Wide: Boundless Hospitality." Please consider joining us for this exciting and inspiring event. For more information, contact Emily Hill at ehill@presbyterian.ca.

Jennifer de Combe serves as the Associate Secretary for Canadian Ministries. She holds a Masters in Sacred Theology, and is known for her enthusiasm for ministry, commitment to kindness, and sense of social justice.

Teaching God,

We thank you for those who are present in our lives as teachers. We pray for those who share your love through words, stories, and presence.

We thank you for those within our churches that work with our children and youth. Grant them your patience and wisdom.

Help us to support all those who share their knowledge of you. Equip us also to share what we know.

In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

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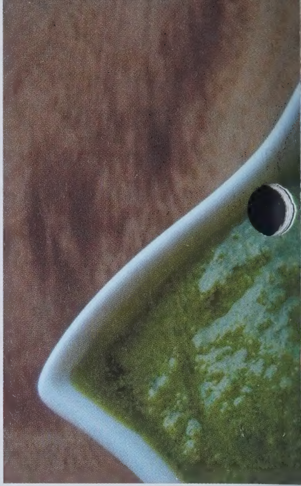
Age*	Fixed Rate for Life**	Approx. Annual Payment	Immediate One-time Charitable Tax Receipt
65	4.64%	$2,320	$11,521
70	5.11%	$2,555	$13,483
75	5.72%	$2,860	$15,310
80	6.53%	$3,265	$16,818

Note: * Minimum age of 60 years and a minimum annuity of $5,000 is required
** Rate is based on a single male as of January 20, 2017, and is subject to change based on age and gender.

What to do next

Find out the rate you would receive, the charitable tax receipt you would get, and the percentage of the annual payment which is tax-exempt with a no-obligation, personal and confidential quote. Contact Michael Scheidt, Gift Administrator, Stewardship and Planned Giving at 1-800-619-7301 ext. 239 or by email at mscheidt@presbyterian.ca



100 Mile Dinners
A Feast at Your Doorstep!

by Linda Herron

Christ's food in our souls.
Our food shared like his.
Christ's life in our hands,
Our lives shaped by His.
Christ's love in our heart
Our love warmed through his.
Christ's peace on our path,
Our path following His.*

**A Wee Worship Book: Wild Goose Worship Group (p.90)*

Trinity's 100-mile dinner captures the essence of 'being at table' as friends in Christ, while celebrating the vastness of God's bounty so very 'close to home'. It has been a privilege for Trinity Presbyterian Church to experience what it means to intentionally seek out and serve cuisine produced and prepared within 100 miles (160.93 kilometres) of our church home at Bayview Avenue and the Highway 401 in Toronto. Of course, a rather large Great Lake rests to the south of our 'bay view', meaning that our radius to source food and drink is 'north, east, and west.'

Oh, what a radius it is! Just imagine the seemingly unlimited selection to be found in the waters near Peterborough, the fields of Wellington County, the Vineyards of Prince Edward County, the orchards of the Niagara, the remarkable wonder of the Holland Marsh, and the maple forests of Simcoe County.

It has been fun 'googling' the distances, establishing the boundaries, and then going about working within it. The food we have seen arrive at the church expresses the heritage,

Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. **Acts 2:46-47**

interests, and ethnicities of our people. The detail and commitment are beautiful to see. Through it all, from 'farm to table' and all points in between, we hear stories of people rekindling family favourites of old, some from Canada and some from countries far away which, though they may have never visited, are still a vital part of who they are.

We hear of people fondly remembering grandparents and parents and precious moments shared in food preparation, including harvest time at the farm, brown bag lunches taken on the bus to school, and recipes written out on what now appears to be ancient parchment paper. We hear of utensils and dishes seldom used which were called upon to make this or that, and, communication in loads of ways about how much will result in how many and how long for that and whether some fine dishes were best presented in a bowl or on a tray, family style or buffet!

It is always good to know where the food you are eating has come from, how it has been grown, and how far it has travelled. In an age where it is possible to buy food from the other side of the world for less that our local farmers can grow it, at any season of the year, it is wonderful to savour a meal that has been planted, grown, processed, and eaten within 100 miles of your church home.

Trinity has a long history of gathering at table together during all the seasons of our lives and the life of the church. Trinity's 100-Mile Dinner has been held each year in November since 2010. One of our Congregational Life Ministry members had seen an article about these types of dinners. The concept was in keeping with our desire to be good stewards of the environment; it would also be a great way to share a meal together. Our Congregational Life Ministry took up the challenge, planned the menu keeping in mind the 100 mile distance boundary, and we were off and running.

There are many reasons to eat locally. Locally grown foods tend to taste better and preparing the food yourself means that you know everything that's in each dish. Supporting local farmers keeps money in the local economy and helps support smaller businesses. The 100-Mile Dinners can also encourage church members to discuss the environment and how we obtain the food we place on our tables. What is the cost to the environment of transporting our food from distance lands?

Some of the farmers we have used over the many years of holding our 100-Mile Dinners have farms in Rockton, Ancaster, Bradford, and Campbellville. These are local farmers who grow their produce in a sustainable and responsible way. They grow their produce in the rich soil of Ontario and often have farm shops right on their properties for customers to purchase their fruits and vegetables.

We also purchase our produce from farmers' markets in the city. Sweet corn, squash, garlic, tomatoes, potatoes, and red onions are some of the produce we have purchased. We serve local warm apple cider, chicken, and especially popular is the locally made ice cream!

We have combined the dinner with a fundraiser for Trinity in the form of a Christmas Dessert Walk. Aside from the delicious sit down dinner we have

Trinity's renowned bakers bake cookies, cakes, loaves, squares, and pies—generally desserts that can be frozen for use at a later time. These wonderful desserts are brought to the dinner and put on display for people to bid on in a silent auction. The fortunate person with the highest bid at the end of the night takes the dessert home to enjoy during the Christmas season. It makes for a great evening of fun, food, and fellowship! It is a joy to be together like this in faith, hope, and love!

Dear Lord, bless this food to our use
and us to Thy service,
and make us ever mindful of the needs
of others.
For Christ's sake, we pray.
Amen.

How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity! **Psalm 133:1**

Freedom i
Slavery to

From the Perspecti

Opening Prayer

Oh God Our God,

How majestic is your name in all the earth. The whole world is filled with your glory. You have created each one of us in your image, male and female. We cannot even comprehend that. And yet Lord, we also know that our world has been corrupted by sin, and that women, though a reflection of you, are often kept in prisons—in types of slavery— that only they see, and you see. We pray you give us your eyes today and always, that we may also be people who see, and would respond as followers of Jesus.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

hrist: From
powerment

Women in Africa

by Bridget Ben-Naimah
and Carol Weinberg

Introduction

Despite the significant inroads women are making in different facets of life in Africa, there are still many challenges that constitute modern slavery. The following are thoughts taken from a survey of African Presbyterian and Reformed women's leaders, describing how they perceive the presence of slavery in families, society, and the church.

In the Family

From Liberia: "Liberia is one of the top 20 countries where child marriage is prevalent. Nearly half of Liberia's girls are married as adolescents. Girls who become child brides have a higher chance of dying during childbirth; they typically stop their educational studies; they often become victims of domestic violence. Even though the law says that children under the age of 18 cannot be married, this is still a common practice."

From Madagascar: “Because of the poverty in our country, most of the poor families take their children out of school and send them to work or beg for money in the street. The women feel most responsible for their family. The mother knows she must feed her family every day. Sometimes this means the husband may send his wife out as a prostitute. And she is willing because she believes she has no choice. It doesn’t concern the husband that his salary isn’t enough; he needs to eat every day, and if he doesn’t have money, he takes it from his wife. She has to find a way to give him money, otherwise domestic violence will happen.”

From Togo: “The African woman is under watch from birth to death. She is under forced labour, meaning she exists between the oven and the mill/grind. Then as soon as they are home, they serve their husbands.”

From D.R. Congo: “Let me witness something for you: In the villages slavery of women has hit a record. A man marries, for instance, three or more wives. Each wife has a field. She goes to cultivate it every morning and gathers vegetables for the lunch on her way back. She gets water from a river on the way back home from the field. She cooks food for the family. And she does all the household tasks even when she is pregnant. The husband only goes hunting or fishing. Or others stay home playing cards.”

From Nigeria: “Sometimes I wonder whether women should not earn some allowances for living out Proverbs 31.”

From Zambia: “In rural areas, women have no access to own land. Women are large in number, but still vote only for men.”

From Zambia: "Farming families production is done by both wife and husband. But when it comes to spending, the wife has no say. In that way, it is deemed as modern day slavery. Culturally, most decisions are made by men, forcing women just to ratify whatever decision has been made by the men. The girl child is given more household chores than her male counterpart, making her receive treatment as a slave."

Sisters from South Sudan

In the Church:

From D.R. Congo: "Although the women are raised/taught as deacons, elders, and even pastors in our church, and are even chosen as delegates locally, they are never elected as leaders or representatives beyond locally. There are no women Moderators or General Secretaries (at the national or Presbytery level). Even at the simple church level of the 52 congregations, there are no female pastors leading them even though we have 10 ordained female pastors. Even the number of women chosen to represent the church at larger gatherings is low: 5%. And when these women raise their hands to speak they are not chosen. They are only allowed to make decisions for women, and these committees of women are never even considered by men." An additional note: Women's Directors in the Presbyterian Church work fulltime, but do not receive a salary.

From Malawi: "In some churches, women are denied leadership roles and would spend most of the time in the kitchen cooking for the men attending meetings at the church."

From Nigeria: "A good number of female ministers are still associate ministers, not ministers in charge of parishes or presbyteries or synods."

From Ghana: "No means of raising funds in the church other than with constant offerings."

In Society:

From Cameroon: "Societal forms of slavery in Cameroon include corruption, women and children's trafficking, and sexual harassment."

From Ghana: "Market Queens enslave peasant farmers in acts of buying and selling. Traditional customs and rites particularly with widowhood are forms of slavery."

From Nigeria: "Sometimes women are denied positions at work that are due to them based on gender. And there is human trafficking: children and women, especially the girl child is used for forced labour and sex." And, "Children from poor homes are asked to sell even during school hours on the streets to make ends meet. Some families engage in outright sales of their babies."

From Mauritius: "More and more, drug addictions, alcoholism, domestic violence, and gambling are forms of slavery that we have to address."

From D.R. Congo: "When the husband in a family dies, and if there is no will registered in the government, the family of the husband often comes in and takes all the possessions of the family, including the home. The woman is left with her children and with no place to live."

From Togo: "Women have no right to speak. They do not have the same rights as men. They are not entitled to an inheritance."

From Malawi: "Men and women both work very hard in the tobacco estates, but women get less wages."

Biblical Reflection

Freedom from Slavery; Our role today:

Not too long ago, some radio stations in Ghana, West Africa, reported the arrest of a young

man who had taken six young girls from Ghana and the neighboring country, Togo, in preparation for their journey to the Middle East to work. Upon a tip-off, the police launched a search and arrested him. They found out that this man had been engaged in this practice for some time, together with some other accomplices.

We have heard reports from young women, who willingly accept to go on such journeys in search of jobs, or presumably greener pastures, and to their shock, have found themselves in total misery. Some eventually pay huge sums of money to agents to regain their seized travel documents and return home. Some literally flee under cover to return home. A number have returned home in very poor medical state.

Clearly, decades after the slave trade, much of which was experienced along the west coast of Africa, new forms of slavery have surfaced. The capture of over 200 Chibok girls by Boko Haram militants in Nigeria; the recruitment of young girls to serve in brothels in cities around the world; the migration of young girls from the northern part of Ghana to Accra, the capital, to serve as porters

who live on the streets and at bus terminals, and the exploitation of children for income—all the above pass for slavery of some sort. It is sad to note that the church, which is expected to be the light, cannot be left off the hook when it comes to identifying culprits who perpetrate slavery. Leaders of some *mushroom churches*[1] exploit members for money, material things, and time in exchange for prophesies, expected blessings, and progress in life. Such followers end up virtually becoming slaves to such charlatans in some African societies today.

The good news is that Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, has an agendum to set the slave free. In his 'mission statement' in Luke 4:18, Jesus declares that He was chosen and sent to proclaim liberty to the captives and to set the oppressed free.

Through many of the Biblical narratives, we see that God has been interested in saving God's people from slavery. When God's people were sent into slavery in exile, God worked out a plan through the prophets to bring God's people back home to Jerusalem.[2] The completion of the plan is found in John 3:16, where God sends God's only Son, Jesus Christ, to redeem human beings from being slaves to sin. In Galatians 5:1, we read that freedom is what we have because Christ has set us free. We, therefore, need to stand as free people and not allow ourselves to become slaves again because as John 8:36 says, if the Son sets us free, we are free indeed.

As Christians, we ought to recognize that we have been set free through Christ; set free from leading a life of sin and brought into the light of Christ. As free people, we should be interested in setting others free from all kinds of slavery, even slavery related to lack of knowledge. We are to tell the good news of our freedom in Christ Jesus.

Secondly, we can be advocates for those who are enduring various forms of slavery in homes, in the church, in schools, and in cultural contexts. Practices, such as female genital mutilation and child marriages, are still being enforced, leading young girls into situations that limit their freedom and potential. Some even die because of these practices. There is still a lot of work to be done, but God is counting on us to get involved.

May God help us to be truly free to be in the position to set others free through the power of Jesus Christ, the source of our freedom.

Questions for Reflection

Read: Romans 6: 16–18, 22, *The Message*

> So, since we're out from under the old tyranny, does that mean we can live any old way we want? Since we're free in the freedom of God, can we do anything that comes to mind? Hardly. You know well enough from your own experience that there are some acts of so-called freedom that destroy freedom. Offer yourselves to sin, for instance, and it's your last free act. But offer yourselves to the ways of God and the freedom never quits. All your lives you've let sin tell you what to do. But thank God you've started listening to a new master, one whose commands set you free to live openly in his freedom!

1. What does it mean to you to be "free in the freedom of God"?

> "It's not about the church meeting your needs; it's about joining the mission of God's people to meet the world's needs."
>
> ~ Brian D. McLaren

When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, "Woman, you are set free from your ailment."

Luke 13:12 (NRSV

2. Why might the writer say that offering yourself to sin is "your last free act"?
3. What might the 'Master' be asking you to do today, if you only listen?

Read: 1 Corinthians 7: 21, 22, *The Message*

> Stay where you were when God called your name. Were you a slave? Slavery is no roadblock to obeying and believing. I don't mean you're stuck and can't leave. If you have a chance at freedom, go ahead and take it. I'm simply trying to point out that under your new Master you're going to experience a marvelous freedom you would never have dreamed of. On the other hand, if you were free when Christ called you, you'll experience a delightful "enslavement to God" you would never have dreamed of.

1. Look at the irony in this passage concerning freedom and enslavement. Describe what that means.
2. Put yourself in the position a person who is experiencing the slavery of oppression such as someone in forced labor, or a woman overwhelmed by poverty, many children, and an unsupportive spouse. Can this passage help you to pray for these people differently in addition to seeking their "physical" release? Spend some time doing that, perhaps relating your prayers to some of the quotes of women at the start of the study.

Slavery Today

According to the Global Slavery Index, which can be accessed at: www.globalslaveryindex.org, in 2016 it was estimated that 45.8 million people are in some form of modern slavery in 167 countries, including the United States and Canada. "Modern Day Slavery" generally is recognized to include the following: recruitment and use of child soldiers; forced child labour; domestic servitude; bonded labour or debt; forced labour; and sex trafficking including child sex trafficking. The countries with the highest percentage of slavery relative to their population include North Korea, Uzbekistan, Cambodia, India, and Qatar. But close behind these countries ranking in a tie for 6th place include the Democratic

Republic of Congo, Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, Libya, and the Central African Republic. And closely following those are 19 more countries from Sub-Saharan Africa, which represent the ranking of just 19 and 20 in the overall index.

Slavery is broadly defined in the Merriam-Webster's Dictionary as, "submission to a dominating influence." Or it can be as narrowly defined as the current international definition which states: "Slavery is the status or condition of a person over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised." (Article 1(1) of the 1926 Convention on Slavery). International Justice Mission, a Christian not-for-profit organization, uses this definition: "Slavery is the use of lies or violence to force another person to work for little or no pay."[3]

Clearly, slavery is an assault on human dignity and the God given worth of every individual. It preys particularly on the poor and vulnerable, frequently on people looking for safety, security, or a better life. People might become victims as they seek out hope and a future for their child. And yet, it might simply occur because it is possible to exercise power over someone that has no seeming power to resist.

As of today, slavery has now been outlawed in all recognized countries, the last being Mauritania in 2007. Nevertheless, there are still more slaves today than at any previous point in history.[4] And though Africa represents only 13.6% of global slavery, it ranks first in terms of child trafficking. Early marriage is also a major problem, with UNICEF predicting that by 2050, half of all child brides in the world will be African.

In high conflict countries like D.R. Congo, South Sudan, Burundi, Central African Republic, and even Nigeria because of the presence of Boko Haram, children are recruited as soldiers. And, as people are displaced, they become more vulnerable to being exploited—either through forced labour, sex trafficking, or domestic servitude. Some statistics from the Global Slavery Index, in Africa:

- In Ghana, survey results suggest that there are an estimated 103,300 people enslaved in that country, of which 85 percent are in forced labour, and 15 percent in formed marriage;
- 21,000 child slaves currently work in the Ghanaian fishing industry along Lake Volta and its surroundings;
- In Ethiopia, from April to September 2015, charities working on the ground estimated 1,300 women and girls were raped while 1,600 were abducted in three counties;

- While in the Central African Republic, one quarter of the population (450,000 people) have been displaced because of conflict, 2.8 million people have been displaced in the D.R. Congo;
- The Walk Free Foundation survey suggests that more than 200,000 workers are subject to forced labour in South Africa.

What can I do to help end slavery today?

- Go on a prayer walk alone or with others, with your eyes wide open. Ask the Lord to show you the people he sees that are in "slavery." Pray for them then, or make a note, and pray when you return to your starting point.
- Become a mentor for a youth at risk.
- Learn more about slavery through websites such as: http://www.freetheslaves.net/.
- Set a date to gather for Part 2 of this study, which will be printed in the July August issue of *Glad Tidings* with a focus on Tumekutana 2015: A Gathering of Presbyterian and Reformed Women's leaders from 23 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, and their partners, held in Abokobi, Ghana.

Closing Prayer

Included in this prayer are the closing words of African Theologian, Mercy Amba Oduyoye, from her book, Beads and Strands[5]:

> Our Gracious Lord in Heaven,
>
> We come before you now with thanks. Thanks that in Christ, we have true freedom. Thanks that in Christ, we have a Savior who always sees us. He sees us when we are bent over, burdened, and enslaved, unable to look up or see hope before us. And yet he calls us toward him that we may be healed. We ask for your grace to humble ourselves and become slaves only to you. We acknowledge that it is such a hard concept to embrace. And yet, Jesus "did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant,." (Philippians 2:6–7) Give us that same mind we pray.
>
> Lord we also pray for the 45.8 million people who are enslaved right now.

Each one was created in your image and is precious in your sight. Lord have mercy on each of these, and the many who are enslaved in ways that are not visible. Give us your eyes, that we may be women who have mercy on others and are part of releasing the bonds that keep people enslaved.

And Lord, we pray with our sister Mercy, as she lifts up the voice of women,
"May we have joy
As we learn to define ourselves.
Our world, our home, our journey.
May we do so
Telling our own stories and
Singing our own songs,
Enjoying them as they are or for what they may become,
Weaving the new patterns we want to wear,
We continue to tell our tales of the genesis of our participation.
We gather the whole household and begin a new tale."

We pray this in the name of Jesus, who makes all things new. Amen.

---

[1] A term for self-styled churches that do not have theologically sound teachings and practices.

[2] Read Exodus 13:3ff and Isaiah 48:12–20.

[3] https://www.ijm.org/casework/forced-labour-slavery

[4] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slavery

[5] Oduyoye, Mercy Amba, Beads and Strands (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), 108–109.

2017–2018 Study

Our 2017–18 will begin in the November December edition of *Glad Tidings*. We are excited to have Noel and Dorcas Gordon as a writers for this 4-part study on Palestine.

Presbyterian Woman of Faith

The Presbyterian Church in Canada, the Women's Missionary Society, and the Order of Diaconal Ministries established the Presbyterian Woman of Faith award to recognize the courageous and faithful work of women within our church in three distinct categories: faithful service, specific accomplishment, or lifetime achievement. We received nominations from across the church, and after prayers and reflection we are excited to announce the following recipients.

At the National Presbyterian Women's Gathering in May 2017, the Presbyterian Woman of Faith Award will be presented to:

Faithful Service

- Audrey Miller, Westminster Presbyterian Church, Ottawa ON

Specific Accomplishment

- The Rev. Margaret Mullin, Winnipeg Inner City Missions, Winnipeg MB

Lifetime of Achievement

- Joy Randall, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Cobourg ON

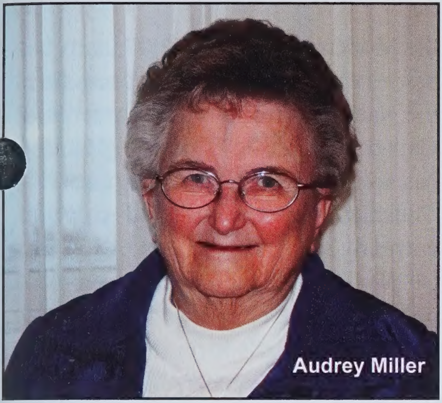
Audrey Miller, Faithful Service

Audrey Miller has been a member of Westminster Presbyterian Church, Ottawa, for 55 years where her faith is demonstrated through her service to others, but also from her commitment to a life of prayer and a willingness to hear God's calling. She served as an elder for 25 years, a Sunday school teacher/superintendent, as well as the chairperson of the Worship and Nurture Team (Christian Education). She has been actively involved with the Pastoral Care Team, and the Mission and Outreach Team. She was the president of Westminster's Women's Missionary Society twice, and is a life member.

Audrey has always had a special interest in youth ministry and Canadian Girls in Training (CGIT). She served as a group leader, member of the Ottawa CGIT Committee, and representative on the National CGIT Association. She did this work wholeheartedly and with great enthusiasm, and became a friend and mentor to many girls over five decades.

Audrey and her husband Bill have always maintained an 'Open Door' policy at their home. The Millers have always offered their hearts and God's love to everyone who came their way with a welcome, an extra chair at the table, and more warmth than words can describe.

Audrey has also initiated ministries, which have become integral to the life of Westminster Church. Firmly committed to a life of prayer, she started both the congregational prayer chain, and a prayer partners program, which matches seniors with youth in the


Audrey Miller

Joy Randall

church.

Audrey has given countless hours of time to support one of Ottawa's inner-city drop-in centres, Centre 507. She initiated teams to make sandwiches for people in the centre and on the streets which continues 25 years later.

Audrey serves others because she is interested in others, and wants the best for them. She sees the good in people even when they have lost sight of it themselves. Through Audrey's nurture and friendship, people find God.

Recently, she continues to initiate ministry by bringing people together over homemade muffins weekly at a local mall, where she quickly becomes friends with strangers, creating a network of care for seniors in her neighbourhood.

Audrey is a role model of Christian service to others: her incredible energy, enthusiasm and generosity of spirit come from deep abiding faith in the Lord. She continually initiates ministries as she sees the need. Audrey exemplifies James 1:22, "Be doers of the word and not hearers only." When asked about her many ministries, Audrey humbly replied: "I think God can do more with us if we just let Him."

Joy Randall, Lifetime of Achievement

Joy Randall served as a missionary in Taiwan for 35 years, from 1969 to 2004, as head of nursing at Changhua Christian Hospital. After her retirement, she returned to Canada and is a vital presence in her home congregation of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Cobourg.

Through a life of service and mission, Joy has served The Presbyterian Church in Canada, the people of Taiwan, and God. Her efforts and service have brought people closer to God and improved the lives and well-being of all those with whom she has come in contact.

In 1994, Joy received a special award for nursing from the Taiwan Provincial Government, presented by the Director of Health. In 2000, she was recognized by the Government of Taiwan and received the highest award for Dedication to Medical Work. In 2002, the Taiwan Nursing Association recognized her 30 years of service in nursing. In 2004, Joy was given honorary citizenship in Changhua County.

In Taiwan, Joy is fondly remembered and since her retirement she has been invited back for many special occasions, including the anniversary of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan and of Changhua Christian Hospital. Her legacy of service has strengthened the faith of the people with whom she has had the opportunity to interact and work.

In retirement, Joy continues to serve both the local and national church. Within her home congregation, Joy is a vital presence. She is an active elder at St. Andrew's and recently stepped down from the role of Clerk of Session. She is a member of the choir and provides pastoral care within the congregation. Joy is an active member of the WMS where she currently serves as president of the Peterborough Presbyterial and immediate past president of the CNOB Synodical. She continues to be a vibrant presence in the congregation and is willing to provide Sunday supply within the local area.

Within the wider church, Joy has served on the Advisory Committee for International Ministries and chaired its Personnel Committee. She was on the Committee to Advise the Moderator in 2006–2007, and has served on the Planning Team for the National Presbyterian Women's Gathering since 2012. Since 2013, Joy has served on the CNOB Regional Consultative Committee and is currently the chairperson.

Joy's infectious spirit welcomes people into the church and serves as a model for Christ's love. Her service to the WMS and the local church is born out of a desire to be in connection with people, to share the good news, and to live a life full of service. Joy's legacy of service has impacted people both in Canada and internationally.

The Rev. Dr. Margaret Mullin, Specific Accomplishment

The Rev. Dr. Margaret Mullin has a passion for inner city mission and has been working in the inner city of Winnipeg since 1999. She has been the Executive Director of Winnipeg Inner City Missions since 2003, a mission of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, serving the city's north end. Margaret has devoted her life to healing and reconciliation between the church and Canada's First Nations and Aboriginal people. Due to her Ojibway and Irish/Scottish origins, she has often felt that "my people hurt my people," which has driven Margaret to be a bridge between the two worlds and to find ways to heal from the past and move forward together in peace.

Margaret played a large role in the successful merger of Flora House and Anishinabe Fellowship Centre to become the Winnipeg Inner City Missions (WICM), in 2004. The Winnipeg Inner City Missions' mission statement is: "to embrace all people in Winnipeg's inner city, inspire life-long learning, and build social and personal wellbeing." Flora House focuses on creating a safe place where the special needs of children and youth are nurtured and supported. Anishinabe Fellowship Centre offers a miracle store for the surrounding community. The members of Place of Hope Presbyterian Church volunteer their time to keep the thrift store open. They refer anyone with counselling or advocacy needs to WICM's Parish Social Worker.

In 2007, Margaret spearheaded the initiative to build a 20-unit transitional housing complex called Anishinabe Place of Hope, and she has worked hard to secure funding for the enormous building campaign. Anishinabe Place of Hope operates a First Steps to Employment project for adults, who have made a commitment to change the direction of their lives.

In addition to being the Executive Director of Winnipeg Inner City Missions, Margaret also serves as minister for Place of Hope Congregation, which was constituted by the Presbytery of Winnipeg on November 30, 2014. Forty-three of the 45 charter members are of Aboriginal or Métis heritage and most live below the poverty line. Although Sunday worship was always part of

Margaret Mullin

the ministry of Winnipeg Inner City Missions, Margaret advocated for the congregation to be given official status within the presbytery allowing members to vote in the courts of the church. Margaret sees self determination as a key component to the healing process, and an important step in the process of reconciliation between the church and First Nations and Aboriginal people.[1]

In 2007, Margaret received the YMCA-YWCA of Winnipeg Woman of Distinction award and in 2012 the Vancouver School of Theology bestowed her with an honorary Doctorate degree for her ground breaking work in the inner city of Winnipeg.

Margaret has dedicated her life to providing a safe environment for people to become a safe community of believers together, as well as to share in worship that welcomes and respects all people and integrates

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Mission In Action

Dr. Nick and Becky Bauman, Nepal

Soft Landings

After so many hours of travel (after more than 30 hours on the road, you lose track), it felt like such a gift to walk out into the sunshine of a Kathmandu afternoon to be received by a friend we have been anticipating to meet for so long.

Nick and I have travelled in different ways and in different places and it was decidedly comforting to step off a plane, and find friendly faces waiting to welcome us and take us to our new home. We filled a van with luggage, latched a few to a taxi's roof, and started a first tour of the city as we drove to our six-week guest house home.

We passed a few landmarks, a recommended grocery store, a church gathering place, a dirty river, and to the kids' great excitement, they saw cows wandering alongside the road—just like we had promised them. Not so sure we are going to be able to fulfill Selema's long-held desire to own a goat so easily, but this was an easy one to check off.

The apartment was stocked with some food to start us off, a pot of soup on the stove, a phone ready for us to use, a list of phone numbers and reading materials, maps, offers of help nearby, and encouragement to rest and take the next days to settle in before the work begins. They have clearly done this before.

Soup never tasted better and our beds were cosy and horizontal (expectations are low after trying to sleep in seats for so long!). That first sleep was sound, though it did not last long. Two of our children, Freda and Selema, woke for the day at 4 a.m. with a critical need for chapstick. They seem to have stirred the rooster though the sun has not yet risen. And so our first full day in Nepal has begun. Cock-a-doodle-doooooo!

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continued from page 15

Presbyterian Women of Faith

Christian and Aboriginal traditional Spiritual teachings. Margaret's motto is: ENGAGE people with unconditional love, ENCOURAGE them at every step of their way, and EMPOWER them to take charge of their own life. Margaret's down-to-earth preaching provides solutions from God's word for life's everyday challenges. She offers unconditional acceptance, meets people where they are, and stirs hope that life can be different. Her work in the inner city of Winnipeg with the marginalized and outcasts of society speaks volumes about the Jesus after whom she patterns her ministry.

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[1] Margaret Mullin, "A Voice for the Voiceless," *The Presbyterian Record*, January 1, 2015.

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In the Society

Presbyterial

The **Huron-Perth** WMS Presbyterial held their annual meeting at Knox Presbyterian Church, Listowel, on February 7. The theme for the day was, Mission Minded—An Attitude of Mission.

Ruth Hart, our president, opened the meeting followed by a welcome from Knox's minister, the Rev. Don McCallum. Robina Alexander, President of the Listowel WMS, also welcomed us.

After singing, Come Sing O Church in Joy, Ruth Hart said a prayer, followed by a meditation. The WMS purpose was repeated in unison, and we heard the minutes of the 2016 annual meeting. Secretaries from the committees gave their yearly reports consisting of what each WMS group had accomplished in 2016.

Willie Drost gave the nominations report and then Shirley Aitcheson installed the 2017 executive. St. Mary's Friendship Auxiliary WMS led the In Memoriam, remembering our members who passed away during the past year.

The women of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church led the devotions, followed by our afternoon speaker, Amber Heidman. During her presentation on refugees, she told us about their refugee family's arrival at the airport in Toronto, and their journey and settling in Listowel.

We closed with singing, Christ You Call Us All to Service, followed with a prayer.

London Presbyterial met for their 103rd Annual Meeting on January 19 at Oakridge Presbyterian Church in London.

Valerie Shaw, president, welcomed everyone and introduced the theme, Rooted in Faith. After a song-a-long, prayer, and introduction of guests, reports were given.

The Rev. Ed Hoekstra installed the officers and then the Rev. Theresa MacDonald-Lee gave an update on Camp Kintail. She also led a Bible study on faith, and we discussed our personal faith stories in groups.

The Burns-Mosa ladies led our worship service and in Memoriam for four members who had passed away in 2017: Margaret Ford, Alice Pauley, Jean Archibald, and Ruth Gates.

After lunch and another song-a-long, three members of the Presbyterial spoke of how they were rooted in their faith. Cathy Reid began by narrating the mission work of Dr. Strang-Savage, who left Ailsa Craig in the 30s to minister in Canada's West in Peace River and Cold Lake.

Winn Files then told of her experience in India in the 40s, where her father, Fred Knox, was a missionary. She was born there

Photo (L to R): Valerie Shaw, Cathy Reid, Winn Files and Karon Baron

and was sent to a private school 700 miles away from her parents. Pauline Brown was their neighbour in the Bhil mission field.

Cathy Reid and Karen Baron then spoke of their mission trip to Malawi in 2016. Their work is a partnership where the people express what they need to improve their quality of life. Over 120 feminine hygiene kits where given out during their last trip. These women sure exemplified what it means to be Rooted in Faith.

Then, we sang My Faith Looks Up to Thee and Valerie Shaw closed the meeting with prayer.

~Elaine Brown

Maitland Presbyterial held their Annual Meeting on January 16 at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Wingham with the theme, Truth and Reconciliation. President Mary Simmons constituted the meeting and Karen Webster, president of the Wingham WMS, welcomed us.

Mae Raynard and Mary Simmons led The Blanket Exercise. Blankets are spread out and everyone begins by standing on a blanket of their own. The blankets represent the lands of what is now called Canada (Turtle Island) and we represented the First Peoples. We then experienced the history of Canada beginning with the arrival of the first Europeans. We were reminded of treaties and residential schools. At one time, Presbyterians operated 11 residential schools, and this was later reduced to two residential schools. All residential schools have now been closed.

After a delicious lunch, President Mary Simmons conducted the business meeting. Kay McCormack, June Elliott, and Laura MacDonald were remembered in a Memorial Service using three pink roses. The Rev. Peggy Kinsman installed the new executive and Mary Simmons extended an invitation to the Spring Rally on May 15 at Camp Kintail.

~Lorraine Clugston

Waterloo-Wellington Presbyterial held their Annual Meeting on February 27 at Duff's Presbyterian Church, Puslinch, ON. Following delicious refreshments, the Rev. Jane Swatridge welcomed us on behalf of the session and congregation and led us in worship.

Our President, the Dr. Wilma Welsh, constituted the meeting with prayer. Barb Bonner introduced our three guest speakers from the WMS national office, Dr. Sarah Kim, Colleen Wood, and Alexis McKeown.

The Rev. Kim, WMS Executive Director, challenged us to continue working to fulfill the vision of the women who founded the WMS. Today, it can be our vision to work in solidarity with other women, both here and around the world, until all who are oppressed are free.

Colleen Wood, Editor of *Glad Tidings* magazine (part-time), encouraged us to use GT articles as a learning resource, along with the study guides which focus on specific mission issues affecting women, men, and children around the world.

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Alexis McKeown, Program and Communications Coordinator (part-time), challenged us to consider why we are members of the WMS. She urged us to take every opportunity to connect with the next generation of women—to nurture, mentor, and share our commitment with them.

The business meeting followed as 2016 reports were given and accepted. Six delegates will be attending the CNOB Synodical Annual Meeting in Lindsay, ON.

The president closed the meeting with the Benediction.

East Toronto Presbyterial held their 102nd Annual Meeting on February 25, with the theme, Caring for Yourself While Caring for Others. This theme was inspired by the January-February issue of Glad Tidings. Linda Alldred-Johnson, our guest speaker, serves as Parish Nurse for Armour Heights Presbyterian Church, Toronto, and St. Matthew's United Church, Richmond Hill, Ontario. She focused her presentation on the following: the difference between a caregiver and a care provider; servitude—a way of coping and servanthood; issues and concerns that affect caregivers; balancing your role as a caregiver; and knowing when and where to seek support.

Worship, singing, and business completed the day, along with a very meaningful memorial service honouring eight members of the presbyterial.

Local

Dr. Margaret Strang WMS of First Presbyterian Church, Chatham, celebrated its 84th Anniversary at Riverview Gardens on February 15. Dorothy Chapple and Helen Glassco, lifelong members of the group, cut the cake.

Remembering

Margaret Ford
Evening Friendship,
Knox-St Andrews Presbyterian
Church, Dutton ON

Anne Wilton
St Andrew's WMS
Owen Sound ON

Rena Alice Wilson
St. Paul's WMS,
Peterborough ON

Lily Kuhn
Fairview Presbyterian churches
WMS, Vancouver BC

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Commissioning 4:00
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Love and Care

Buying an Air Conditioner

by Colleen Wood

We have a weird saying in our house—sometimes you just have to buy an air conditioner. Like most weird sayings, there is a story behind this one.

About four weeks before my wedding, I had a severe gallbladder attack. It was bad enough that I was scheduled for surgery three weeks before the wedding. You would think that would be a huge stress for me, but truly, all I cared about at that moment was that I would have relief from the constant pain.

Also, it was July, in Toronto, and I lived on the top floor of a three-storey walk up apartment building, with no air conditioner. It was hot. Usually I could tolerate the heat, but that was without the severe pain.

One night, my fiancé showed up with a new window air conditioner. It was kind of dumb. I would be moving into his place in less than a month, and it wouldn't eliminate my pain. Yet, there was nothing he could do to fix the situation. So, what he did was try to make one little thing, a little bit better. He bought an air conditioner.

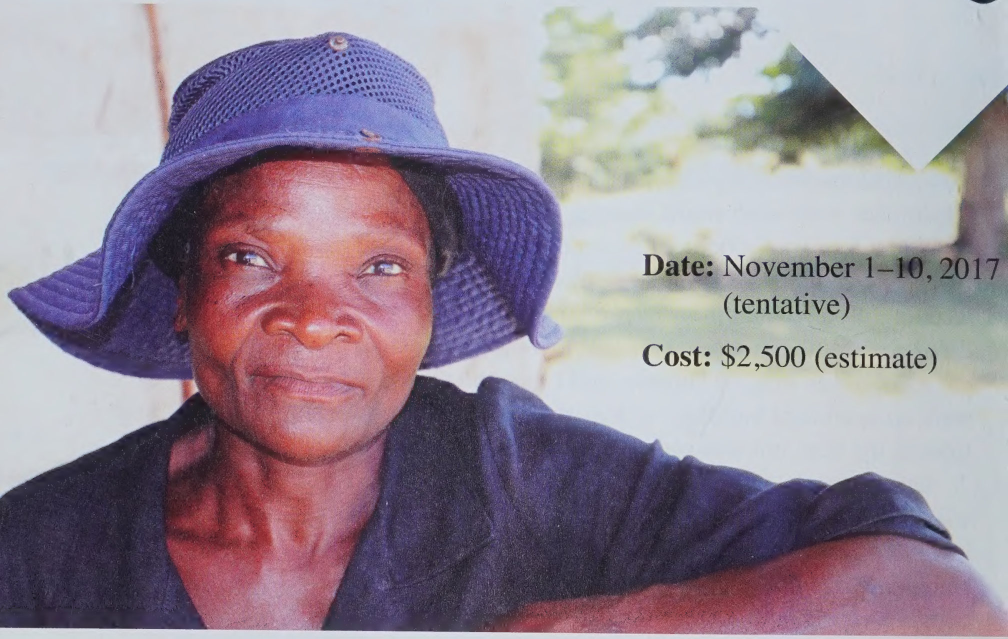
Today, I will, "go out and buy an air conditioner." A dear friend had emergency surgery yesterday. We are praying and have offered to help in practical ways. Today, I will head out during my lunch to put together a care package for the family, and pick up a prayer shawl from my church. Tomorrow, I will deliver the care package.

We can't help medically. We can't fix it. However, we can show our love and care.

We all know people who are going through a tough time. Think about them now. Pray for them. Consider how you can show them God's love. us continue to love each other since love comes from God. Everyone who loves is born of God and experiences a relationship with God. The person who refuses to love doesn't know the first thing about God, because God is love—so you can't know him if you don't love. This is how God showed his love for us: God sent his only Son into the world so we might live through him. This is the kind of love we are talking about—not that we once upon a time loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to clear away our sins and the damage they've done to our relationship with God.

HAITI Exposure Tour

Applications due June 30, 2017



Date: November 1–10, 2017
(tentative)

Cost: $2,500 (estimate)

Want to learn more about current issues that are affecting women, children, and families in Haiti?

With the help of PWS&D, the WMS is planning an exposure tour to Haiti. The programs you'll visit are working to support vulnerable women and girls and put an end to gender-based violence. You will also see work that is being done to reduce vulnerability to climate change and food insecurity.

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contact Alexis McKeown,
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or 800-619-7301

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Glad Tidings

July/August 2017

Rooted in Love

Presbyterian Women's Gathering

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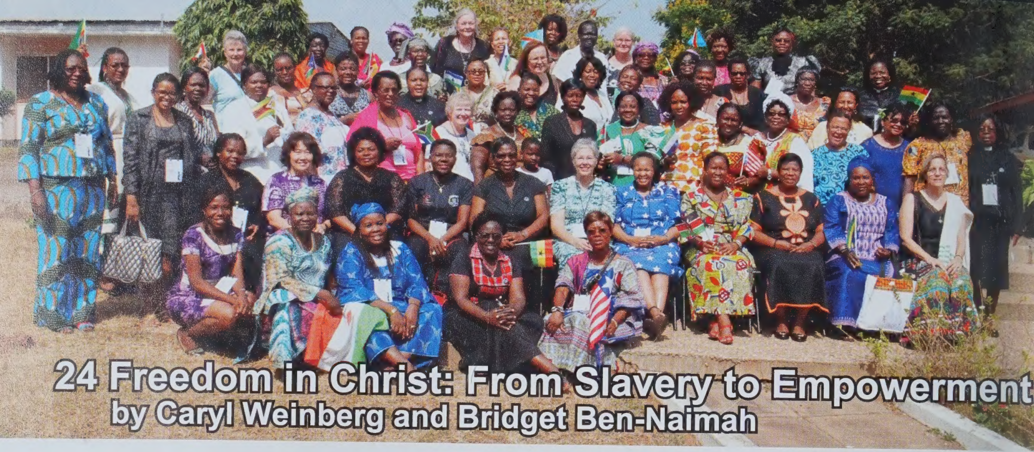

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by Caryl Weinberg and Bridget Ben-Naimah

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Rooted in Love

Presbyterian Women's Gathering

For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them. (Matthew 18:20, NRSV).

Planning team

This time, 500 came together, rooted in God's love to be challenged and encouraged, to pray and to discern, to laugh and to cry. From May 19 to 22, 500 women and a few men, from across Canada, and 15 International and Ecumenical guests, gathered at The Sheraton Hotel and Conference Centre in Richmond Hill, ON.

Worship

Worship is a key part of the Gathering and we began each worship service with the entry of our gardener. On Friday, the gardener entered and began planting the garden. She planted seeds and watered them. As she left, tiny shoots appeared and the Christ candle was lit.

The Rev. Dr. Patricia Dutcher-Walls was our preacher for this day. She first presented us with her own translation of Genesis 2 which was well received (and can be found at womensgathering.ca). She then preached on Genesis 2, reminding us that God is central, but that God's creation needs caretakers. Humans are to keep the land. Humans are also intimately connected to one another as God's creation. We are to be rooted in

God's love and grounded in creation.

Our Prayers of the People on Friday shared the prayers of our International guests. Among the many prayers, we lifted up the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan, which like us is dealing with issues of human sexuality; we prayed for Hungary, particularly its minority peoples and immigrants; and we prayed for Kenya which will be moving towards general elections this August.

On Saturday, the gardener once again, opened our worship service. She tended to her garden that had begun to grow with lots of greens and flowers. Our preacher for this morning was the Rev. Dr. Mona Scrivens, who preached on our theme passage of Ephesians 3:16-21. She spoke about prayers and the strength of prayers. She suggested that our prayers are often too small and too general. She reminded us how much God loves us and that we are to walk in victory because we know God loves us.

Our Prayers of the People on Saturday were led by Margaret Mullin and women from the Winnipeg Inner City Missions. They led a four directions prayer, facing East, South, West, and North. We together prayed that young people would be guided by God's Spirit.

On Sunday worship, the gardener entered to find that the garden had died. Life and growth had been replaced by dead branches and plants. With sadness, as the gardener left, she reluctantly lit the Christ candle. This morning, the Rev. Olwyn Coughlin brought Jeremiah 32:1-15 to life through a dramatic reading. Then, the Rev. Linda Ashfield challenged us to think about this passage. Her message was a message of hope. God's people, during perilous times are called to act out the hope of God in action.

Sunday's worship also included an offering for the PWS&D's work in Haiti, working to put an end to gender-based violence. This offering allowed us to celebrate our multi-ethnic denomination as volunteers from the Ghanaian Presbyterian Church came and helped us to dance and sing our offering forward. Over $14,000 were given to this important work.

Our final worship service was on Monday morning and the gardener returned to find that her garden had bloomed. There were grapes, lots of green, and abundant beauty! The gardener harvested some grapes and skipped away enjoying a grape from her harvest. Our preacher, the Rev. Dr. Karen Horst, preached on John 15:1-17. She reminded us to abide in God. We must spend time with our Lord and we are most productive when we spend adequate time resting in God. We are also to bear fruit. We closed this time of worship with communion to strengthen us for the journey home.

During each worship service, we praised God and were encouraged in our singing by the Rev. Hugh Donnelly. His choice of songs, reminded us that we are a people, who both praise God and seek justice and inclusion.

Mission Fair

On Friday afternoon, we enjoyed a wonderful Mission Fair, where we played, discussed, worked, and learned about 20 different mission organizations. Among our national mission programs, we enjoyed learning about Canada Ministries.through quizzes and maps and a travelling tea party. Glad Tidings challenged us with a special scavenger hunt using the May-June edition of the magazine. The Atlantic Mission Society engaged us with a test, pictures, and conversation. Presbyterian World Service & Development and Canadian Foodgrains Bank showed a video, while The Women's Missionary Society encouraged participants to share their prayers on a pray tree, and to create a scrapbook page on what mission means.

We also enjoyed learning about mission organizations with a local focus. Participants learned about The Raw Carrot out of Paris, Ontario that provides employment and skills training for marginalized individuals. Participants cut and prepared soup, and enjoyed a bowl of their tasty soup. Little Miracles Music and Play Ministry out of St. John's and Prairie Presbyterian Churches in Winnipeg had participants singing and playing with a wonderful parachute. This program reaches out to children, aged five and under, and their caregivers.

The afternoon was filled with lots of conversations and laughter and a big 'thank you' went out to all the organizations that participated.

Keynote Speakers

We were challenged by our keynote speakers at the event. There was a last minute change, as one of our keynote speakers, the Dr. Mary Jo Leddy, was unable to attend due to illness. We were thankful when four of our international guests stepped up and prepared a wonderful presentation of the Tumekutana gathering on Saturday morning. Together, our speakers challenged us, engaged us, and changed us.

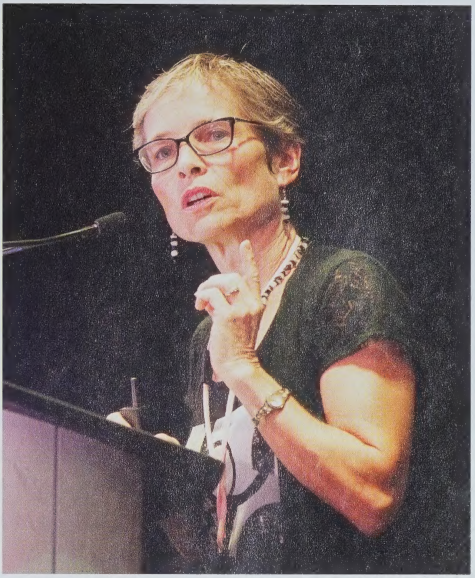
The review of Keynote Speakers has been written by Amy MacLachlan. Amy is a freelance writer and member of Knox, Oakville, Ont. She was the managing editor of the *Presbyterian Record* up until the magazine's demise in December 2016.

Jean Chamberlain

"Eight hundred mothers die every day in the developing world because of pregnancy complications," said Dr. Jean Chamberlain Froese, Founder of Save the Mothers. "That's 292,000 every year."

"Can we make a difference? Can we change the world? I believe we can."

A Canadian from Hamilton, ON, she has lived in Uganda for the past 12 years helping to save women, who are dying from childbirth complications.



Chamberlain Froese calls these deaths "a great injustice," driving home her point by contrasting these mostly ignored maternal deaths with the disappearance of Malaysia Airlines' Flight 370, where all 239 people on board were presumed dead when the aircraft disappeared into the Indian Ocean back in 2014.

The story was front-page news, with in-depth investigations about what went wrong and discussions on how to prevent something like it from happening again.

"But what about the 800 women who die every day? We don't have the same sense of justice for them. We say, 'Too bad.' We don't see these women as valuable."

In addition to mothers, newborns are also drastically affected, with 2.6

million stillbirths, and 2.7 million babies dying in their first seven days of life in the developing world.

"Those babies who die are just as valuable as the ones who die here," said Chamberlain Froese.

Add to that, the two million women who are fistula sufferers (an obstetric fistula is a tear in the bowel or bladder caused by long and difficult labour), who are our 21st-century lepers. "No one wants to be around them. They become outcasts. We need to stop the reasons why this is happening."

Chamberlain Froese realized that to improve the care available to pregnant women in places like Uganda, there had to be training and education for local leaders so they could speak up and ask for change.

"You need a critical mass asking for change to create a tipping point," she said. "And what creates a tipping point? Advocacy, education, policy, legislation, and time."

There are three main reasons why mothers and babies are dying in childbirth or suffering life-long complications: The first is a delay at home. "Women often need money from their husband or need their husband's signature for surgery." The second is a delay in transportation. Often women have no way to get to a hospital or clinic, or have to ride on the back of a motorcycle while in labour. The third delay is due to poor facilities. Many towns and villages simply lack the equipment or know-how to deal with serious problems.

"So, we need to create game changers and to train multi-disciplinary indigenous leaders to bring about change."

Save the Mothers is doing just that. They created a Masters program in Public Health Leadership at Uganda Christian University, and are equipping a network of dedicated leaders; so far, they have trained 450 East African leaders and professionals in six strategic spheres of influence: law and politics, media, education, community mobilizers, health, and faith communities.

To further help care facilities better respond to challenges, Save the Mothers has created the Mother Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative. Hospitals are improved and equipped in 10 main areas to offer better training and facilities.

"Every child deserves a mother," said Chamberlain Froese, who has been named to the Order of Canada for her commitment to saving the lives of women and babies. She noted that in the developing world, when a mother dies, her children often become orphans, as it is common for fathers to leave and remarry.

But there is hope. So far, there has been a 25 per cent reduction in deaths of mothers in Uganda in the last five years. "We are part of the advocacy that is bringing change," said Chamberlain Froese.

To continue this positive momentum, Save the Mothers wants to train 80 new East African leaders, and hopes to their work expand to Ghana. Also, with Chamberlain Froese's recent move back to Canada (where she has resumed her career as an obstetrician/gynecologist at St. Joseph's Hospital in Hamilton), the organization is transitioning to a new East-African director. "It's what's supposed to happen," said Chamberlain Froese with a chuckle. "I've worked myself out of a job!" (Presbyterian minister, the Rev. Dr. Daniel Scott is the managing director here in Canada.)

"God called me to train up local people who can speak up using their own voice," said Chamberlain Froese, noting she sensed God's call on her life from a young age.

"Speak for those who have no voice," she said, quoting from Proverbs 31. "For the rights of all who are destitute."

How can you help?

Learn more about Save the Mothers at savethemothers.org or read Chamberlain Froese's newest book, *The Game Changers*. You can also donate funds or participate in a Save the Mothers walk—these happen every year on Mother's Day weekend.

Cindy Blackstock

"Our biggest job as adults is to stand up for kids," said Dr. Cindy Blackstock, Executive Director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada.

"None of you would be okay with Aboriginal children not getting what other kids do because of their race," she continued. But, "less money is being given [for their education] because the government doesn't think they're important."

"Discrimination towards First Nations children has to be addressed for reconciliation to occur."

Blackstock was one of the keynote speakers at the National Presbyterian Women's Gathering. She spoke about the need for change and for ordinary people to speak up for what is right.

"You have been trained your entire lives to look away," Blackstock noted, quoting Gord Downie, frontman of The Tragically Hip and advocate for the rights of Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

Blackstock spoke about the differences between monies spent on things like education, as well as access to services (or lack thereof) for First Nations children on reserves, compared with most Canadians.

"It is our own system of apartheid," she said. "In B.C.," for example, "only 14.8 per cent of First Nations children on reserves had any engagement with social services."

"It has caused a chasm in reconciliation."

Blackstock is a member of the Gitksan First Nation. Her organization brings together First Nation and non-Aboriginal peoples, providing resources to empower First Nations children, youth and families.

She encouraged the women at the Gathering to find the courage to speak up for what you think is right; to be advocates for children everywhere; to ensure all children have equal opportunity to succeed. She referred to the idea of having "moral courage vs. moral cowardice."

To illustrate her point, she told the story of two long-ago Presbyterians: Dr. Peter Henderson Bryce and Duncan Campbell Scott. In 1904, Bryce was hired by the Department of the Interior to manage public health issues. Through his work, he came to realize the horrors that were occurring in residential schools—children were dying at a rate of 24 per cent/year—and he spoke out on the subject. His book, The Story of a National Crime contained the findings of his studies, along with suggestions for keeping kids alive, but the government said they couldn't afford to make the changes. He took his report to the media, and, as a result, lost his job.

"But he never stopped talking," said Blackstock.

In contrast, Scott, who was head of the Department of Indian Affairs, played into the dominant practice of the time, even ignoring a letter from a schoolboy saying he was starving in a residential school. "Ninety-nine per cent of the Indian children at these schools are too fat," was his response.

"He implemented the regime," said Blackstock, and, in turn, was rewarded for his efforts and dedication to the government.

"It seems Scott was rewarded for being quiet," she said. Though, on his deathbed, he is reported to have said, 'I've never done anything courageous in my entire life'."

"Our First Nations kids on reserves spent over 66 million nights in foster care between 1989 and 2012. Who do you want to be?" she asked. "Bryce or Scott?"

Blackstock denounced the government's historical practice of making small changes here and there instead of the sweeping reform that

is so desperately needed, calling it "a toxic potion of incremental equality."

"A half-billion dollars are being spent on a birthday party for Canada this year! So what are our kids losing out to?"

Blackstock encouraged us to adopt the Calls to Action that came out of the recent Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The #1 call to action is child welfare equity; the third is Jordan's Principle (which ensures Aboriginal children have access to government services); and numbers 6–12 all have to do with education.

For these kids, said Blackstock, "their best hope is you. We must speak up."

"On Canada's 150th birthday, let's ensure we raise a generation of Aboriginal kids who don't have to recover from their childhood, and a generation of non-Indigenous children who never have to say they're sorry."

How can you help?

Blackstock suggests making a heart garden at your home or church. Each heart represents the memory of a child lost in residential schools, and is a great way to get kids involved. To learn more, go to honouringmemoriesplantingdreams.ca. Also, pray for healing and reconciliation, and for the creation of meaningful relationships among all peoples in Canada.

Tumekutana

When original keynote speaker, Dr. Mary Jo Leddy, had to cancel at the last minute due to illness, a group of women from Africa stepped into Leddy's place with a presentation about their group, Tumekutana.

The Swahili name

means, “We have come together,” and the group exists for that purpose—to gather women of Presbyterian and Reformed backgrounds living in Africa, for learning, mentoring, encouragement, challenge, prayer, networking and solidarity.

Tumekutana is composed of members from 22 African countries. Caryl Weinberg, the group’s coordinator, is a member of the Presbyterian Church (USA), and was a long-time missionary in Africa. It was out of her “love for Africa and African women” that she wanted to help start this group.

“These women are my heroes,” she said, of the three others who shared the stage with her. “Several of us were dreaming for some time. And I worked on many challenges. And where do you even start? My boss said, ‘Go where the energy is.’ And where was it? With the women.”

Despite the enormous energy and optimism that lie with the women of Africa, “they can also feel isolated and helpless. A mom might come up to you for help, and you can’t give her any. Or sometimes violence or disasters happen that you have no control over,” said Weinberg. “Still, these women seem to be super-human.”

“But these women, like us, need rest, need space, need peers. They do turn to the Lord, but they also need to be with people who just ‘get it’. I saw these women as I travelled. I knew them, but they didn’t know each other. And the Lord led me to [these women], and soon after, by God’s mercy and grace, Tumekutana was born.”

Veronica Muchiri is one of these women. She is the national director of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, which represents 200,000 women, and she was one of “the dreamers” who worked with Weinberg to create Tumekutana.

“October 2007 was our first meeting in Kenya,” said Muchiri, who is also the group’s treasurer. “It was a big struggle for us to come together; a journey of faith and love. We came from 16 countries at that first meeting, and we spoke about the challenges we face and how we can work towards meeting those challenges.”

In December of that year, Kenya held elections, and suddenly tribes rose up against tribes, and massive killing ensued.

“I saw on the news, women and children fleeing their homes. I could not be quiet,” said Muchiri. “I called our church leaders; they said this was too big for us. So I called the women—and we went to the displaced people in camps and took them supplies and food.”

“I received calls from women in other countries, asking ‘what can we do for you?’ They said they were praying for us and standing with us. The love and concern and encouragement I received gave me the

strength to continue working."

Eventually peace came to Kenya, and the women realized their strength and the influence they could have.

"Without Tumekutana, I don't know how they would have kept going. We were the first to go into volatile areas. The church later joined us. Because of Tumekutana, we could support thousands of people."

"Tumekutana is indeed a call to obey God's call," said Muchiri. "A call to love. And a call to deny yourself for the sake of your sister in another place."

"You just have to start with one step. And the Lord opens up the journey before you."

Jessie Fubara-Manuel is the group's secretary. She receives and reads all the letters sent by members.

"Prayer is our bedrock," she said. "We pray for one another, to break the loneliness. It feels like someone is holding your hand."

She read a small selection of letters to the Gathering. They contained stories of good news, simple updates on life, requests for prayer, stories of disaster and hardship, violence and war. There was also a letter from Janet Brewer, current WMS president, letting the women know that women in Canada were praying for them, and that they are not alone.

Lastly, we heard from the Rev. Dr. Bridget BenNaimah, Tumekutana's president.

"Africa is so vast," she began, "there are many languages: we receive letters in English, French, Portuguese, even Spanish and Arabic. We have 50 countries; we have our challenges.

But it's not all gloomy. We have a lot of things to be grateful for and things to celebrate."

She noted that in some countries, women are leaders in government; they are involved in decision-making, and "are taking bold and positive steps in life," said BenNaimah. "They are also being ordained; but truly, we do not yet hold the highest positions in churches. I have yet to see a woman moderator!"

Sadly, there is still much to be done.

"Women and girls are victims of rape, abduction, sexual violence, and dehumanization. We are also negatively affected by patriarchy, being robbed of our God-given dignity, and are victims of sex trafficking and child trafficking by families trying to make ends meet. There is also child marriage, genital mutilation, marital abuse, etc."

She said many women suffer from a lack of empowerment or knowledge. Therefore, it is a huge step forward to be able to come together at their conferences and tell their stories in a safe space. They're encouraged to rise above their challenges and to be informed and empowered, and then told to go back and inform and empower other women.

"Tumekutana is often how women identify a calling in other areas of their life," said BenNaimah.

About 80 women attend each conference, which are held every three years. They will meet next in Johannesberg, South Africa, in September 2018.

"We need your prayers, your continued partnership, and support," said BenNaimah, noting how difficult it can be for the women to save enough money to travel to the event.

"But by God's grace, we are growing. And we are looking to get more African countries participating. We are also hoping to strengthen our relationship with the WMS. We can support one another in a relationship of love."

How can you help?

Learn more at tumekutana.org and sign up for their prayer newsletter. This month's *Glad Tidings* study is also on Tumekutana.

Workshops, Forums and Feasting

The event also included a number of workshops and forums to teach and engage the participants. Participants learned about the work of the ARISE ministry (that reaches out to sex-trade workers in East Toronto); danced with Anointed Joy liturgical dance troupe; sang with the Rev. Hugh Donnelly; participated in Christian yoga to begin their day; and explored the theme scripture with the Rev. Dr. Emily Bisset.

We also feasted at three different banquets. On Friday night, at our welcome banquet, we celebrated those who travelled the farthest to get to The Gathering (three days!) and the participants who were the youngest (17) and the oldest (95). The Moderator of the 142nd General Assembly, the Rev. Douglas Rollwage, brought greetings and spoke of the work of women in the New Testament, and of the work that we are to continue.

Saturday evening's banquet included the theme address given by Dr. Cindy Blackstock. Following dinner, we enjoyed the wonderful singing and dancing of Tribal Vision, an Aboriginal organization that teaches Aboriginal dance and music. Their delightful dialogue and dancing both informed and entertained us.

Finally, during Sunday evening's banquet, we celebrated women of The Presbyterian Church as we awarded The Presbyterian Women of Faith awards to three deserving women.

We look forward to seeing you all again in 2020!

Susan Trapp reflects...

I attended the forum, Filled with the Fullness of God. During this time, the Rev. Dr. Emily Bisset led us through the pitfalls of optimism and pessimism to the process of hope in our Christian walk with God.

Some of the challenges with optimism were the prosperity Gospel, the progress driven Gospel, and solar Christianity. They create confusion in the midst of hope.

On the other hand, pessimism gives us regret and heartache and confusion. If followed, it could lead to roots that grow in the dark. It could guide us to the whole range of human experience and the fullness of God by trusting in him. We share in the holiness, peace, justice, and joy.

I have experienced God's faithfulness and have been able to rest in hope. Striving for hope inspires us to action. Subjects, such as social justice and witness to God's action, compel my friends (who attended The Gathering) and our churches to reach out in new ways with the inspiration of God.

Women of Faith Awarded

by Amy MacLachlan

Three powerhouse Presbyterians recognized for outstanding service.

Three women were honoured with a Woman of Faith award at the final banquet of the National Presbyterian Women's Gathering. Of the 39 women nominated, these three women were recognized for making a "significant contribution to the life of her church or community," and were awarded in three different areas: Faithful Service, Audrey Miller; Specific Accomplishment, Rev. Dr. Margaret Mullin; and Lifetime of Achievement, Joy Randall.

Audrey Miller

Known as "an initiator," Audrey Miller knows how to get stuff done. She has a keen sense for noticing a need, and is quick to respond.

"She is interested in others and sees the best in people, even when they can no longer see it in themselves," said Carol Ann Joiner, who spoke on her behalf.

"She has an incredible energy, enthusiasm and generosity of spirit that comes from the Lord," she continued. "My mom always says, 'I think God can do more with us if we just let Him.'"

Miller has been a member of Westminster, Ottawa, for 55 years, an elder for 25 years, and involved with Canadian Girls in Training (CGIT) for five decades.

"CGIT gave me my roots in my faith. During my pre-teen years, I was accepted, nurtured and guided by strong, caring, confident leaders. We were empowered and encouraged," said Miller. "We were growing in our faith together, and many of those friendships remain."

Miller even stood up from her wheelchair and proudly recited the CGIT Purpose.

"We cannot nurture our faith on our own. We need community," she said. "I learned so much about my faith while serving others."

Miller has also been involved in her church as a Sunday school superintendent, as part of the mission and outreach committee, and in pastoral care. She is a WMS life member, began a prayer ministry that matches seniors with youth in the church, and created a sandwich ministry for Centre 507, a downtown drop-in centre in Ottawa.

"I love to talk," she said, "and when I talk with people, I share the good news of Jesus Christ."

Miller will be donating her $500 award money to the Ottawa Civic Hospital's neurology centre.

Rev. Dr. Margaret Mullin

"Thundering Eagle Woman," Mullin's Anishinabe name, is executive director of Winnipeg Inner City Missions, a post she has held since 2003. She is also the minister at Place of Hope Presbyterian Church, a congregation that was constituted by the presbytery in 2014—something Mullin greatly wanted, as its members (43 of the 45 are indigenous and live below the poverty line) now have a voice and a vote in the courts of the church.

She has devoted her life to healing and reconciliation between the church and Canada's First Nations. Her personal journey to merge her Christian faith with the faith and teaching of her indigenous roots has aided others on their healing journeys, and has been an example of how the church and indigenous communities can work together toward understanding, healing and a shared faith.

It makes sense then that her motto is, engage people with unconditional love, encourage them at every step of their way, and empower them to take charge of their own life.

Mullin said the people she serves have "encouraged me, cried in my arms, and had hopes for their futures … it was their resilience, strength, optimism, and humour in the face of everything that inspired me.

"They loved me into life."

Mullin has been on her own journey of healing and reconciliation. She has Ojibway and Irish/Scottish roots—"which means my people hurt my people," she said.

She has spent much of her life reclaiming what had been lost, being taught by Anishinabe elders, and rediscovering the teachings and sacred ceremonies of her ancestors.

"And through it all, I looked through the eyes of Jesus."

Mullin was instrumental in merging the Anishinabe Fellowship Centre with Flora House to create WICM back in 2004. Three years later, recognizing the need for safe and supported affordable housing for the people in her community, she spearheaded a building and fundraising initiative for a 20-unit transitional housing complex called Anishinabe Place of Hope. She also holds an honorary doctorate from VST, and received a YMCA Woman of Distinction Award.

After listening to her biography being read by the Rev. Dr. Ian McDonald, Associate Secretary of Canadian Ministries, Mullin stood up and joked, "All I can say is, 'Who is that woman?'"

In 1928, Mullin's mother "was scooped off the reserve after her mother died." Her mom was then raised in foster homes, losing her language, culture, and family. "Except she didn't lose her spirit," said Mullin.

"This is my mother's drum," she said, holding it up for the gathered women to see. "This drum is my mother's spirit."

Mullin then encouraged us to think about the children who struggle both on and off reserve. "It's about helping them to grow in a society that has set them aside for too many years.

"Look at the TRC's Calls to Action. Pick one of them and do it in your lifetime, and watch how that grows. … I want our kids to grow up without having to make excuses for who they are. I want our kids to have a good education, and be anything Creator wants them to be."

Mullin then mentioned the Presbyterian Church's eight indigenous ministries. "There are eight directors who struggle daily. Pray for us. Pray for our people."

Mullin will donate the $500 to WICM's summer family camp program.

Joy Randall

Randall has spent much of her life with the PCC as a missionary in Taiwan. For 35 years (1969–2004), she served as head of nursing at Changua Christian Hospital. She is now retired and is a member at St. Andrew's, Cobourg, Ont.

While in Taiwan, she received numerous awards for her work and dedication, and in 2004, was bestowed with honorary citizenship. She is held in such high esteem that two members of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan flew to Canada for the awards ceremony and surprised Randall while she was on stage. They thanked her for her devoted service, and for "sharing the love of Christ."

"What a wonderful surprise!" said Randall. "I feel humbled and I want to share this award with those in my life who have been with me on my faith journey, including the people in Taiwan, who guided me and cared for me, and my parents, who were my spiritual leaders."

She said she remembers wanting to work in the church from an early age, and studying nursing and midwifery and attended Ewart College. Despite feeling a call to service, she recalls not wanting to go to Taiwan because she "couldn't speak Chinese." But God had other plans. Along with Wilma

Welsh, she was the last missionary to be sent out by the WMS.

She related the changes she witnessed in the Changua hospital since she her arrival back in 1969. At that time, there were only 100 beds; today there are 1,500, and four or five hospital branches in other areas. It was the first hospital in Taiwan to offer community health, psychiatry, and specific neonatal care.

"We also had a hospital choir, daily devotions, and a Bible study. Many people came to Christ and were baptized thanks to that Bible study."

Randall was also there when the SARS emergency hit. "The nursing staff said the only way they got through SARS was by attending devotions and Bible study. It helped them remember that Christ was with them.

"We planted seeds, God waters them, and we pray that God works in their hearts."

"As long as God gives me the strength," she said, "I figure God has a purpose for me."

Randall will give her $500 prize money to the WMS, "to encourage all people of the church to be involved in local and world missions."

Amy MacLachlan was the managing editor of the Presbyterian Record until the magazine was closed in December 2016. She keeps herself busy with freelancing, volunteering, and telling her two daughters to tidy their rooms. She is waiting for her next exciting project to come along.

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WMS Council

y Colleen Wood

International guests and their hosts.

The WMS Council met on Thursday, May 18 in Toronto, Ontario. Susan McLennan opened the meeting with a meaningful devotional reminding us that we all likely need to be a little like Mary and a little like Martha.

Following this, Alexis McKeown and Colleen Wood led us in some fun icebreakers. We sang, we laughed, and we got to know each other a little better.

After the approval of the 2016 Auditor's Report, we had discussions on the 2017 and 2018 budgets. Some decreases were seen in staff costs and the budget for Women to Women. The Council was reminded that we now only have three WMS staff: Sarah Kim, Executive Director (full time), Alexis McKeown, Program and Communications Coordinator (part-time, 4 days), and Colleen Wood, Editor of Glad Tidings (contract, 25 hours a week). As well, printing costs have been reduced as we try and do less mailing and more emails.

There was also a discussion regarding our revenue. We wish to remind all groups that we do not assign allocations but we do appreciate all the WMS givings as they allow us to fund the WMS and various mission endeavours.

The Council approved that the Together we Can! projects for 2017–2020 will be Haiti: Reducing Gender-based Violence and The

Kenora Fellowship Centre.

The Council also heard that two mission exposure trips are in the plans. The Haiti trip that was planned for Fall 2017 is being moved to Spring 2018 due to the availability of a tour leader/translator and the transition of a project into another phase. We also hope to have a group attend the Tumekutana African Women's Conference in 2018.

Following lunch, greetings were brought from many of our guests:

- The Rev. Doug Rollwage, Moderator of 142nd General Assembly, brought greetings on behalf of the congregations across Canada. He assured Council that the work of the WMS is greatly cherished and appreciated.
- Linda MacKinnon, President of the Atlantic Mission Society (AMS), brought greetings on behalf of the AMS. As the WMS and AMS spend time together on national church committees, we have come to learn from each other.
- Rev. Ian McDonald, General Secretary, Life and Mission Agency, assured us of their prayers throughout the year as well as while we are at The Gathering.
- Caryl Weinberg from the Presbyterian Church USA (PCUSA) brought greetings on behalf of her local church. She was honoured to be with us as both a PCUSA member and a sister in the Tumekutana Conferences.
- Jessie Fubara-Manuel from the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria brought greetings from the Moderator and the Women's Guild Director (who was denied her visa). She thanked The Presbyterian Church in Canada for having sent the Rev. Dr. Rick Fee to them as a missionary.
- Veronica Muchiri and Eunice Muiru from the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) were thankful that Eunice was able to come to this gathering as she had been denied her visa three years ago. They spoke of our partnership that began with the work of the Dr. Rick Allen. They brought greetings on behalf of their Assembly, the Moderator of PCEA, the General Secretary, and from their women's guild. They reminded us that we have sisters in Kenya and that we are welcome to visit.
- Rebecca Abladey from Presbyterian Church of Ghana and Rev. Bridget Ben-Naimah, from the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ghana, blessed us in song. They brought greetings on behalf of the Moderator, and from the districts and presbyteries of both denominations, and especially

from the women of the church. Their women's fellowships are doing well and are developing strategies to elevate women's faith.

- Mphatso Nguluwe from Livingstonia Synod, Malawi spoke of the privilege to be here among us. She thanked us for what we had done for Malawi, and for the partnership that is so much appreciated. She was grateful for the good work that the Lord had started, and hoped that it will continue—do not get tired of doing a good thing.
- Kristina Deme from the Reformed Church of Hungary brought blessings and peace. She works in a small community with a new church plant for the gypsies (that is what they prefer to be called).
- Caroline Solomon from the Church of North India sang a short song in Hindi for us. It was difficult for her to get her visa so she felt particularly excited to be in Canada.
- Marie Ishibashi from the Korean Presbyterian Church thanked us for the invitation and was grateful to meet so many people. The work of the KCCJ Women includes Bibles, counselling services, social programs, assisting ministers, and many other things. Thank you for your support.
- Chang Mei from the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan brought greetings from the Women's Committee. We are grateful for your invitation.
- Chin Chun, from the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, thanked us for our friendliness. She said, "We feel like a family."

Following the introductions, we heard a fabulous presentation from our friends from Tumekatana. You can read about Tumekatna in this edition of *Glad Tidings*. They also gave us buttons and spoke of an initiative called Thursdays in Black. Around the world, individuals and organizations choose to wear black on Thursday as part of a campaign of solidarity and advocacy against all forms of sexual and gender-based violence.

Our closing worship was conducted by the Rev. Doug Rollwage.

Freedom in Slavery to

From the Perspectiv

Introduction

In the May-June edition of *Glad Tidings*, we learned about slavery in Africa. In this study, we will learn more about the Tumekutana gathering and how the women have come together to respond to slavery.

Opening Prayer

Oh God our God,
You are our God and we are your people. We are connected to one another through you. Today, let us learn about the connections provided by Tumekutana. Let us pray with, and for, our sisters in Africa.

Christ: From mpowerment

Women in Africa, Part 2

by Bridget Ben-Naimah
and Caryl Weinberg

We pray that you give us your eyes today and always to see things as you see them, and may we respond as you would have us respond.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Tumekutana

Tumekutana is a gathering of Presbyterian and Reformed Women's leaders from across Africa. Tumekutana is a Swahili word meaning, "We have come together." It began as a result of the dream of a number of women who believed that women leaders across Africa need to know each other for solidarity in their faith and leadership and for encouragement to share in their struggles and to pray together.

Women in leadership in the churches across Africa often have responsibilities throughout the country they live in. They have a significant impact on the women they lead, as well as their families. Yet, they are often isolated. They often have no peers to talk, pray, cry, and strategize with. So, Tumekutana was started to step into that isolation and create a structure for women to be known, recognized, and supported as the leaders they truly are. It began as a gathering of 16 countries. Two gatherings later, 23 countries are now represented, and as our sisters say, Tumekutana is now a movement.

Meeting every three years, a goal of each Tumekutana gathering is to address a subject which is relevant to women across Africa, but also one where the country hosting the gathering has history and expertise. For example, when the gathering was held in Rwanda in 2011, the focus was on "Women as Agents of Peace, Healing, and Reconciliation." This was based on Colossians 3:15 which says, "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful." There we witnessed and learned from our sisters in the Presbyterian Church of Rwanda. These women had lived through the horror of genocide. Today, they live out their calling as "agents of peace" in healing and reconciliation in very real terms.

In 2015, we met in Ghana and were hosted by the women of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ghana and the Presbyterian Church of Ghana. In Ghana, we focused on the theme of slavery and "Freedom in Christ: From Slavery to Empowerment." Ghana's history does include extensive slavery, but they are proud that their history also includes being the first country in Africa to receive independence from colonization some 60 years ago. The women of the church in Ghana had wrestled with and engaged in the realities of slavery and freedom, independence and leadership, even as they had relied and committed themselves to the work of the one who came to serve—Jesus. They were the right women to lead us through this difficult theme.

Janet Brewer (WMS member) with women from Kenya, Liberia, and Nigeria.

At the Tumekutana conference itself, carefully selected speakers discussed the challenging topics we had chosen. In Ghana, not only did the speakers discuss the reality of the issues associated with slavery—bringing to light what some of us might not have been aware of before—but they also gave some practical steps on how to deal with issues. As an example, one practical step was given by Ms. Hilary Amesika Gbedemah, a lawyer and gender consultant on the Advisory Board of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). She took women through the process of writing a will in order to help women avoid the consequences of traditional inheritance practices so common throughout Africa today.

During the discussion time, another sister shared a practical step that the women in Kenya had used to engage women in the political process at the national level. They held a national gathering but they made it clear they would only allow in those women who had a voter's registration card. Talks were then followed with small group discussions for developing strategies to address issues locally when they returned home.

On the first day of the conference, we all travelled to Cape Coast where we visited a slave castle and saw the horrors of the past. We shed some tears and reflected together. We also spent time in prayer. The visit brought the issue of slavery to reality with each of us, and set the stage for all of us as women to engage in combatting slavery in every form.

Bible Study

Let's think more about the things that might enslave women around the world, or even us.

Read Luke 13:10–13 from *The Message Version*:

> *He was teaching in one of the meeting places on the Sabbath. There was a woman present, so twisted and bent over with arthritis that she couldn't even look up. She had been afflicted with this for eighteen years. When Jesus saw her, he called her over. "Woman, you're free!" He laid hands on her and suddenly she was standing straight and tall, giving glory to God.*

1. Notice the circumstances of the woman. Who initiated the healing, and how?
2. What was the woman's responsibility in order to be healed?
3. Put yourself in this woman's shoes. Re-read the passage. What were the feelings that you experienced throughout the passage?
4. What does this passage say about the nature of Jesus?
5. Are there areas in your own life where you feel you are "enslaved"?
6. Who are those people in your life that are "bent over" with burdens? Are there people you see every day that you might not know but who clearly need their burden to be lifted from them?
7. Take some time to "point out" for Jesus to see you, or others through prayer, asking for freedom that comes through God's healing.

Further Learning

1. Get to know one of the women of Tumekutana through email and maybe more. Be in prayer for and with her as she deals with slavery. Contact: Jessie or

Rebecca at Tumekutana@gmail.com to ask to be connected with someone.

2. Prayer cards for the different countries which have participated in Tumekutana are available online at http://tumekutana.org/prayer-cards-by-country-15/
3. Please consider praying for one country each time you meet together.
4. Below is the testament written by the women of Tumekutana as a response to the talks they heard and the learnings they prioritized. As you read through this testament, consider ways in which your group might support the women of Tumekutana.

2015 Tumekutana Testament

VENUE: Accra, Ghana

THEME: *"Freedom in Christ: From Slavery to Empowerment"*

SCRIPTURE: "Woman, you are freed from your ailment."
Luke 13:12 (NRSV)

1. We, as Presbyterian/Reformed Women Church Leaders in Africa, gathered at the Presbyterian Women's Center, Abokobi , Accra, Ghana, 19–25 September, 2015, state the following:

Thursdays in Black Campaign in the face of rampant gender-based violence

- We give God thanks that God has allowed Tumekutana to grow wider and deeper in connections within and outside our gathering. Our whole existence is founded in God and led by the Holy Spirit.
- We recognize that Tumekutana is a God-given platform for us as Presbyterian/Reformed women to strengthen our faith, to fortify our courage, to amplify our voices, and to multiply our efforts.
- We confess our negligence to recognize and celebrate the efforts undertaken at regional and local levels in response to prior Tumekutana Testaments.
- We grieve that, in these modern times, slavery is still a reality for many African women, be it in the family, the community, the church, society, and continent-wide.
- We deplore that women are enslaved through harmful traditions that take the form of sexual violence, economic exploitation, cultural practices, and ecclesiastic marginalization. Women are considered property, their labor a commodity, and their bodies merchandise or battle grounds.
- We observe that some cultural practices which harm women and children are perpetuated by African sisters as custodians of our traditions, others condoned by traditional leaders to gain influence, and reinforced in our own churches as those affected submit for fear of repercussions in the spiritual realm.

- We deplore rigid interpretations of Biblical passages that withhold basic rights and responsibilities for women in our Churches.
- We decry that, despite being the majority in the church, women are under-represented in governing bodies and marginalized or ignored in decision-making processes because of the patriarchal system currently in place.
- We regret the gross under-representation of women leaders in the political establishment across Africa.
- We rejoice in the statement made by the African Union through the launch of its campaign to end child marriage.
- We are saddened that, in our society, our rights continue to be denied with regard to employment opportunities, education, health care, safe water and sanitation, food and accommodation, and the possibility to pursue our dreams and ambitions.
- We understand that empowerment is a process and recognize, that looking forward, we must empower the younger generations of African women to become leaders in the church and in Tumekutana.

2. We, therefore commit ourselves
   - To grow Tumekutana into a vibrant continent-wide network in support of the women we represent and to collectively raise their voices to higher levels in the ecumenical and political realm.
   - To pray with and for each other, to encourage one another, to share on an ongoing basis our joys and concerns, to exchange information with each other, to strengthen our communications, and also to capture our success stories and lift up our role models.
   - To encourage a dynamic reading of the Bible to bring out the full sense of God's Word and Will with regard to the role of women in the Church and in society.
   - To participate actively in Tumekutana's regional bodies, making them thus functional, and to identify ways to collaborate with each other closer to home on issues that perpetuate slavery in the 21st century.
   - To make women in our communities aware of damaging cultural practices, educate them about modern enslavement, and embark on a process of empowerment.
   - To encourage women leaders in the church to engage in dialogue with

Thursday in Black:

You can join organisations nationally and nationally in supporting Thursdays in Black, a campaign of solidarity and advocacy against all forms of sexual and gender based violence. https://www.thursdaysinblack.co.za/

traditional and Church leaders about issues of modern-day forms of slavery, and to include men in the conversation.

- To sensitize women in our respective countries about existing national legislation to ensure gender mainstreaming, and encourage them to participate in legislative processes.
- To encourage women and men to engage in the Thursdays in Black Campaign in the face of rampant gender-based violence.
- To turn this and the Testaments from 2007 and 2011 into a legacy for which we are accountable through evaluation and reporting.

3. We call on:
   - National leaders of member States of the African Union to ensure the implementation of the AU's campaign to stop child marriage in Africa.
   - Leaders of Presbyterian/Reformed denominations to speak up against harmful cultural practices and other forms of women's enslavement and marginalization.
   - Tumekutana leadership to continue the process of organizational development, to nurture synergies at the regional levels, and create concrete opportunities for joint action in a preventative approach to ending modern-day forms of slavery.

By God's Grace and our own efforts, Tumekutana 2015 doesn't stop here and today—this is where it starts!

African Nations in Attendance:

Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Togo, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

4. Read and reflect on this poem that was written by Jessie Fubara-Manuel, Secretary, Tumekutana (Presbyterian Church of Nigeria) after she visited the Slave Castle, Cape Coast, Ghana.

From the Slave Dungeons of Cape Coast

What madness
Extreme inhumanity
Not accidental
Not mere mistake
Planned and executed
In utter wickedness

Humans turned into goods
Packed in tins
Stored in darkness
Without sunshine
Without rain
Utter insensitivity

Sorting of sorts
The weak and the strong
To utilities
Without a voice
Without a will
Utter shamelessness

Persons without hope
No sense of smell
No need for sight
Day and night alike
All dead to pain
Pain of body and soul
Utter wastefulness

No sight for sign
No feelings for touch
Differences in language
Varieties of people
Yet sharing as one
In utter painfulness

Something better than life
Better than hopelessness
A futureless morrow
A never forgotten past
A welcoming death
Buried in certainty

Everyone is quiet
Some in indifference
Others in ignorance
Or wrapped in pretense
Or covered in religion
Endless sufferings

Ruthless rape
Of the bodies
Of the minds
Ripping off dignity
Stealing humanness
Until nothing is left

And for what?
Want of money?
For more money?
Or simply selfishness
Condemnations of yesterday
Colours of slavery today

Say a prayer
Commit to change
Take an action
In memory of our ancestors
Who passed through living death
Through the Slave Dungeons of
Cape Coast
Into the misery of a new world.

Closing Prayer

Included in this prayer are the closing words of African Theologian, Mercy Amba Oduyoye from her book, Beads and Strands.[1]

Our Gracious Lord in Heaven,

We come before you now with thanks. Thanks that in Christ, we have true freedom. Thanks that in Christ, we have a Savior who always sees us. He sees us when we are bent over, burdened and enslaved, unable to look up or see hope before us. And yet he calls us toward him that we may be healed.

We ask for your grace to humble ourselves and become slaves only to you. We acknowledge that it is such a hard concept to embrace. And yet, Jesus "did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant." (Philippians 2:6–7) Give us that same mind we pray.

Lord, we also pray for the 45.8 million people who are enslaved right now. Each one was created in your image and is precious in your sight. Lord have mercy on each of these, and the many who are enslaved in ways that are not visible. Give us your eyes, that we may be women who have mercy on others and are part of releasing the bonds that keep people enslaved.

And Lord, we pray with our sister Mercy as she lifts up the voice of women,

"May we have joy
As we learn to define ourselves.
Our world, our home, our journey.
May we do so
Telling our own stories and
Singing our own songs,
Enjoying them as they are or for what they may become,
Weaving the new patterns we want to wear,
We continue to tell our tales of the genesis of our participation.
We gather the whole household and begin a new tale."

We pray this in the name of Jesus, who makes all things new. Amen.

Women in their national costumes

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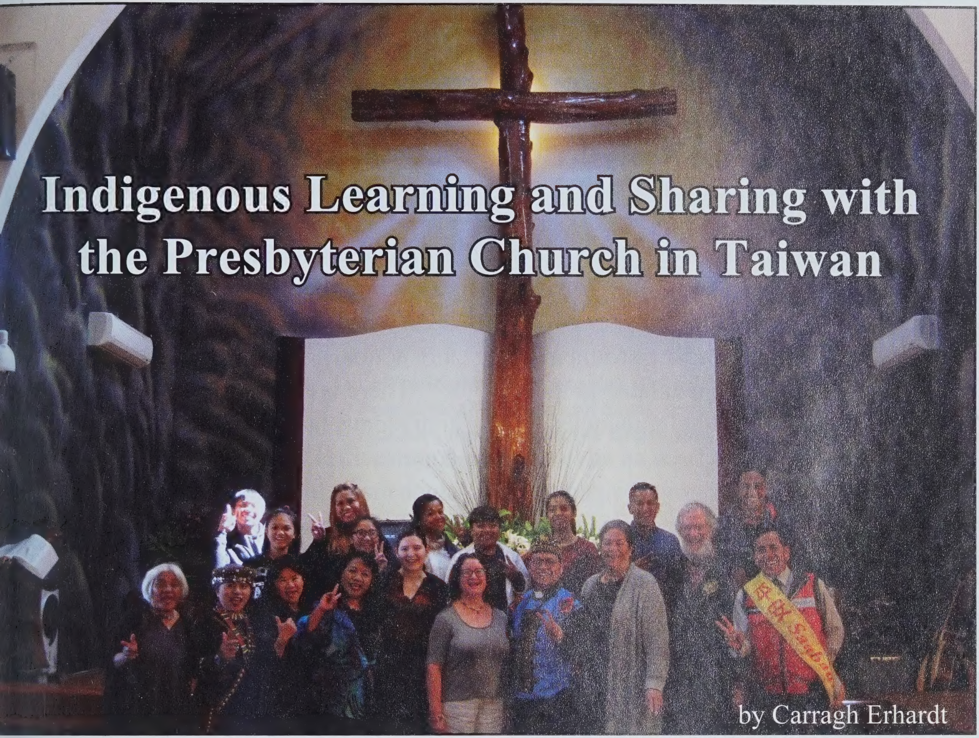
[1] Oduyoye, Mercy Amba, *Beads and Strands* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), 108–109.

Indigenous Learning and Sharing with the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan



by Carragh Erhardt

At worship with members of Wutai "Misty Plateau" Presbyterian Church (Drekay Presbytery).

This February, I had the privilege of travelling to Taiwan with the Rev. Dianne Ollerenshaw (Director of Regional Ministries, Synod of Alberta & the Northwest) and Lori Ransom (Healing & Reconciliation Animator, 2006-2011) as a representative of The Presbyterian Church in Canada at the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan's (PCT) International Forum on the Mission of the Church in Taiwan Today.

The Forum brought together nearly 200 people, including 42 guests from the PCT's international and ecumenical partners. The conference provided opportunities to learn about Taiwan's history, particularly about the PCT's role as a prophetic voice during the period of martial law that lasted from 1949 to 1987. The PCT continues to carry an identity of being an outward-facing church with a focus on mission and justice. This knowledge served as the foundation for the topics we discussed throughout the conference: gender justice, ecological justice, the role of youth in the church, economic justice, and what it means to be an inclusive community.

Following the forum, we spent six days with Presbyterian mission staff and the Rev. Dr. Paul McLean, and we met his Indigenous colleagues for a time of mutual learning and sharing about our countries' approaches to reconciliation.

Approximately 2% of Taiwan's population is Indigenous; however, half of the PCT's membership is Indigenous. Consequently, the PCT and The Bible Society in Taiwan work in partnership to support Indigenous translation groups as they prepare Bibles in their respective languages. This work is instrumental in making the Bible available to the people and preserving Indigenous languages. Paul has been an advisor with six Indigenous groups since 2012—he has served as mission staff in Taiwan intermittently since 1983, supported by Presbyterians Sharing.

We had many good meals and long car rides getting to know some of Paul's Paiwan, Drekay, and Amis colleagues. We also met a few Bunun, Pinuyumayan, and Truku members of the PCT.

Our new acquaintances were very open to teaching us about the issues they face, their concerns and their hopes. For example, in 2016 President Tsai issued an apology to the Indigenous people for 400 years of violating their rights through armed invasion and land seizure. This apology is looked upon with both appreciation and skepticism since the Indigenous people are concerned that President Tsai will not turn her words into action.

There is energy to reclaim Indigenous languages and culture but communities find this challenging since many Indigenous youth move to urban areas for school and work. Some Indigenous ministers are seeking ways to support members of their community, who are now in urban areas so they can continue to feel connected. They also acknowledge that the Indigenous people face greater discrimination in urban areas.

Eleven of the twenty-three presbyteries in the PCT are Indigenous. When we met with staff from the Paiwan Presbytery office,

Dancing with members of the youth group from Wutai Presbyterian Church.

they explained that the PCT's governance structure is set up so that there will be an Indigenous moderator of the PCT every four years to ensure that there are more equal opportunities for the Indigenous members of the PCT to participate in church governance. The Rev. Sudu Tada is the current moderator and since he is Truku, the PCT will soon choose the next Indigenous candidate, who will become a moderator; after moderators are selected, they spend three years working in roles with the General Assembly that support the moderator before they are confirmed as moderator. The Indigenous presbyteries take turns selecting their nominee for moderator. The next nominee will be Bunun and collectively, the Indigenous presbyteries have decided that since there has yet to be a female Indigenous moderator, the next nominee should be a woman.

Left to Right: Dr. Pusin Tali (Principal, Yu-Shan Theological College and Seminary), the Rev. Dr. Paul McLean, the Rev. Dianne Ollerenshaw, Lori Ransom and Carragh Erhardt.

Indigenous members of the PCT are seeking ways to live out both their traditional spirituality and their Christian practices. During a meeting with the Drekay Presbytery staff and translation team, they spoke about conversations they had started about reintegrating some traditional spiritual practices that they chose to discard when Christianity became more prevalent in Drekay communities. Since some of these practices have not been used for decades, elders and church leaders find that there are many interpretations of their significance. Because of this, they explained that the process of reclaiming Indigenous spiritual practices is taking a lot of thoughtful conversation and discernment. One way in which they are already embracing their Drekay culture in church is through wearing traditional garments during worship, both as clergy and as members of the congregation.

I am very grateful to the people we met throughout our trip. It was a blessing to be part of such open dialogue as we asked and answered each other's questions. I look forward to future opportunities to continue this mutual learning and partnership between the PCC and the PCT.

Many thanks to Presbyterians Sharing (International Ministries) and to Paul McLean for co-ordinating this experience.

Mission In Action

Jacqueline Bannerman
Hungary
Balancing Guilt and Gratitude

Life can be challenging here. It takes more effort than what I'm used to in Canada. I take transit for 45 minutes every morning and night—it is more crowded and with more pollution. I don't speak the language, which leads to several confusing encounters per day that sometimes result in unsettling glares and comments behind my back.

But, my life is not hard. Compared to most people I interact with in a day, my life is not hard. After hearing the stories of the refugees I work with, I understand on a whole new level how privileged I am just because of where I was born and what language I speak.

This is true in many ways, but for right now I will focus only on language. I have already heard several stories from the people I teach English to that explain how they ultimately do not want to be living here in Hungary. They talk about how the quality of life is not great compared to other places and the language is really challenging. On top of that, they are constantly discriminated against and are not supported by the government. But, despite this desire to move to somewhere else, many refugees need to think of Hungary as their new, and even permanent, home.

This is because many will not even have the opportunity to move due to their immigration status difficulties. Some may eventually be able to leave, but since they need to find a job immediately, learning Hungarian is a necessity.

I am constantly shocked by the extreme motivation I find in the people I work with. Even with the challenges of learning such a difficult language, most do learn Hungarian. Many refugees also try to learn English. This is in addition to facing their daily struggles. Many miss their homes and family and are treated as outsiders.

This puts my daily struggles into perspective. I am beginning to understand a little bit better what the people I am working with are going through. If I can help even a little bit, then it is worth it and I am thankful for the challenges I go through while living abroad.

I can sometimes relate (in a very small way) as to how it feels like to be a minority. I often stand out in public when people realize I don't speak Hungarian and am not from here. Another way this happens is being the only Canadian. Everything I do is "because I am Canadian" regardless of what it is. People make fun of me for being too polite or saying "sorry" too much. And I have come to realize I am never allowed to be cold here, otherwise I am guaranteed the response "but you're Canadian! You guys never get cold. Don't you live in igloos and ride polar bears to school?" What we often don't realize is that every type of person is in every country, and I may find someone who shares more values with me here in Hungary than someone who lives in my neighbourhood in Canada.

It can get tiring knowing that everything you do represents your entire nation. What happens if you make a mistake? Imagine how this would feel if people already had a negative view of your country. Or if your skin colour was different so before you even spoke, people assumed you are from elsewhere (even if you were actually from that place).

I sometimes struggle because I also feel very guilty about my privilege. I wonder what God's plan is that would allow some to suffer so much and others to go about life never even thinking about this level of suffering. Why is it that such a large proportion of the world suffers? Why do I not struggle as much? Why do I still feel sad even when things are going so well in comparison? What is my role in understanding this? What is my role right now in helping and what will it evolve to be?

Another challenge I face is that I almost feel as though I do not have the right to say I am helping others. For example, I feel this way with many of the people I teach English to. Many of these people are more qualified than me in their education or job experience or are older, meaning they have more life experience. And yet they call me "teacher." How can I be teaching these people, who probably have much more that they could teach me?

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I have come to realize that the person speaking his or her native language holds most of the power in the conversation. I can feel this dynamic change instantly when I am speaking to a native French speaker in English, and then as soon as we switch to French, I feel intimidated and feel as though that person has more power in the situation than me. And I can sense this when speaking with a non-native English speaker as well. Often this can lead to native speakers feeling they are more powerful and entitled to impose their language and teaching on others.

So it involves finding a balance between recognizing your privilege and not translating it to more power. In finding a balance between guilt and gratitude, feeling guilty is not the answer. That will never help anyone, but instead in appreciating what you have and then recognizing the need to help others who are less privileged. And this does not necessarily mean assuming you have more power or skills in helping them, but simply that you are a fellow human being, who wants to make their day a little bit better, in whatever way that may be.

No one person is better than the other, and we each have something we can learn from the other. And sometimes, the moments without words, laughing about a shared understanding that crosses cultures, are the most meaningful moments of all.

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Synodical

On April 25, 139 women registered for the 70th Annual Meeting of **Southwestern Ontario** Synodical at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Walkerton. The women from Walkerton and Bruce Grey Presbyterial made us feel most welcome. The theme for the meeting was Roots and Wings based on Isaiah 40:31, "They will soar on wings like eagles." Burlap roots and colourful butterflies adorned the sanctuary.

Rev. Megan Purdy, minister at St. Andrew's, led an uplifting worship service including Communion. Music was provided by their choir, organist, and pianist

After a nutritious soup and sandwich lunch, Winn Files read greetings from our National President Susan McLelland who was unable to attend. We were privileged to have our three National Staff members with us. Sarah Kim spoke about some of the changes in mission over the past 150 years. In the past, we sent missionaries to various parts of the world and remote areas of Canada. Now, we have very few overseas missionaries. For a long time, women have made up more than half the church. Still, many women and children in the world are oppressed by cultural traditions, lack of medical care, education, and finances. Who will speak up for these women? Globally women are poorer than men. There are different kinds of poverty—spiritual, economic, and social. Often the economically poor are spiritually rich. As WMS women, we must follow the vision of Christ and work with strength as we reach out to women and children.

Rev. Dr. Glynis Williams, Associate Secretary of International Ministries, spoke of her visit to India in January of this year. India's population is growing rapidly and malnutrition is one of the chief causes of death among children five years and under. India's nationalistic government is making it more difficult for religious minorities and has frozen foreign currencies. Fortunately, the PCC is still able to send funds through the Christian Medical Association of India (CMAI). The Christians in India say they still need us to accompany, support, and

pray for them.

Then, Dr. Tori Smit spoke about our history. We need to remember our history and what God has done to be prepared for the future. As God said in Isaiah, "Behold I am doing a new thing."

On Tuesday evening we enjoyed a delicious chicken dinner. Greetings were given by the Moderator of Synod, and the Rev. Dana Benson brought greetings from Grey Bruce Presbytery. The evening entertainment was provided by four local men, who sang a variety of songs—popular, broadway, and gospel. They had us tapping our toes as we enjoyed the music. Hamilton Presbyterial women brought the evening to a close with vespers, including Amazing Grace played by the organ and bagpipes.

On Wednesday, we heard from our other two staff, Colleen Wood and Alexis McKeown. Colleen, Editor of *Glad Tidings*, spoke of the magazine as "written by women for women." The studies have been well received. The next study will be on Palestine. Colleen told us the story of a woman who said she didn't have time to read *Glad Tidings*. However she did read two issues, and decided she did have time to read the magazine, and sent a cheque for three new subscriptions.

Alexis McKeown spoke of the new outreach arm, Women to Women, which is an attempt to reach younger women in a changing world. We need to build relationships and develop leadership. We can share our faith stories. This can be done through modern media. Check out womenshub.ca.

Today's guest speaker was Megan Shin, who at age seven came to Canada from South Korea with her parents. She studied Music Composition and planned a career in music, but God had other plans for her. She graduated from Knox College with an M. Div. and since September 2016 has served as the Recruitment Officer and Counsellor for Knox College. She promotes the college and helps guide students to the right program. She shared stories of some of the students she has helped.

It is always a delight to hear from the Rev. Theresa Macdonald Lee, Director of Camp Kintail. She showed a brief video of a day at Camp. She described Camp as a place where people can be themselves, and where children can be transformed and known as children of God.

This was one of the best synodicals I have attended. I have said that before, but they just keep getting better....

~Eleanor Crabtree

Central Northeastern Ontario and Bermuda Synodical held its annual meeting at St. Andrew's Lindsay from March 31 to April 1. Over 80 people enjoyed the hospitality of a welcoming congregation and presbyterial. Joy Randall, as president, conducted the necessary business efficiently.

We were pleased to have WMS

Council President, Susan McLennan, and her husband, Mark, in attendance. She addressed the synodical on Friday afternoon.

On Friday evening, the men of Lindsay served a delicious roast pork dinner. The talented Kawartha Male Chorus entertained the group with an outstanding concert and got a well-deserved standing ovation.

A highlight of the meeting was the address of our theme speaker, Rob Shropshire, who gave a clear explanation of the refugee situation, government relations, and the church's criteria for making the decisions of sponsorship among the many applicants.

Rev. Lynda Reid, Katherine Allen, and the Rev. Priscilla Anderson had prepared a thought provoking Bible study based on Philippians 4. We were saddened that Lynda could not be with us, but Katherine and Priscilla were excellent facilitators. Good, and at time noisy, discussions took place around the tables.

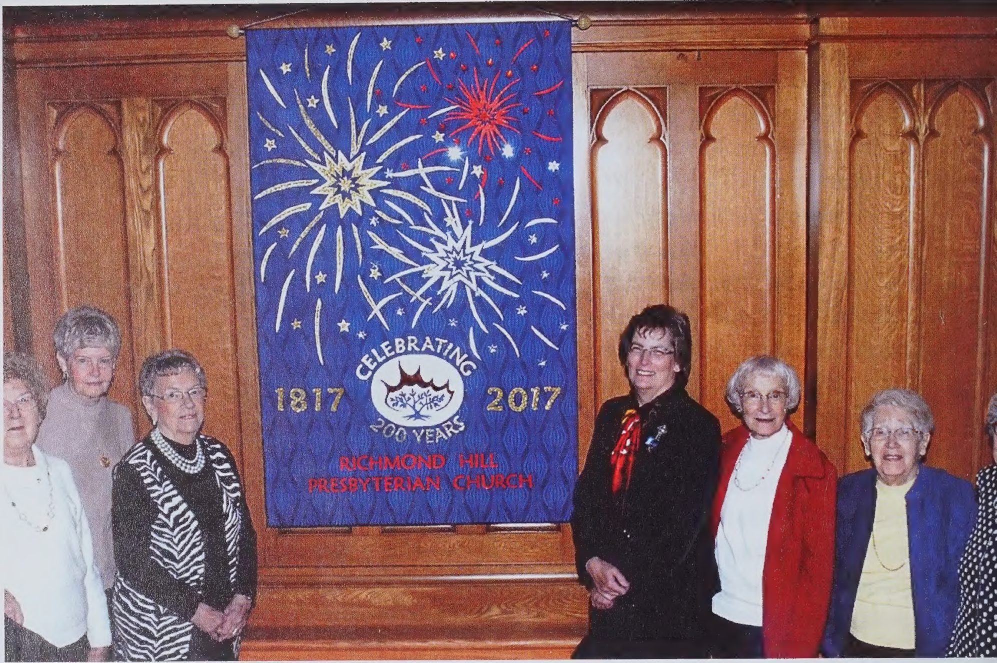
All too soon, it was time for closing worship, the installation of the new executive with Mary Veale-Parker as the new president, and the meaningful communion service led by the Rev. Linda Parks.

Presbyterial

Maitland Presbyterial held their Spring Rally on May 15 at Camp Kintail with nearly 50 members joining the Camp Kintail summer staff for a delicious meal.

President Mary Simmons constituted the meeting with prayer and the summer staff of Camp Kintail led the worship with a theme of Known. Using Psalm 139 as her scripture text, the Rev. Theresa MacDonald-Lee, camp director, led the worship assisted by the young

Kenyon WMS presented six life memberships at their December meeting.



Pictured are Lois Leonard, Martha Ebert, Irene Preston, Bonnie Mooney, Olive Cox, Doris Willoughby, and Lydia Olson at Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church.

people who will be counsellors for the summer. She led an African Bible study of Luke 7:11–15 which involved all voices and then led in prayers of concern. In true camp style, everyone got to do a craft using polished stones from the shores of Lake Huron.

Alex Fensham, Director of Development, shared the future plans for Camp Kintail: a yurt (domed tent) village has been completed and plans are underway to build a new building for training LITs. This will include a dormitory, showers, and space to lead the LITs in their activities. He expressed appreciation to the WMS for past financial support and presented the future opportunities to give to this new project.

Karen Webster, President of Wingham Goforth, presented an Honorary Life membership to Kathy Armstong, who has shown great leadership in Presbyterial and local WMS service.

Local

In January 2017, **Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church** held a celebratory service for their bicentennial. To mark the occasion, the WMS commissioned Bonnie Mooney to design and create a banner for the presentation. It now hangs in the sanctuary.

Paris Presbyterian Church WMS

The Paris Presbyterian Church WMS Auxiliary president interviewed the children of Joel and Rebecca Sherbino when they returned from their time in Malawi (August 2015 to July 2016). Shirley Miller with Isaac 12, Masika 11, and Canaan 8.

Shirley: *What were your feelings when you learned you would spend a year in Malawi?*

Isaac: I was concerned about the long airplane flight.

Masika and Canaan: We didn't want to leave our friends in Paris for a whole year.

Shirley: *There was a lot of luggage your parents took. What was something you insisted on packing?*

Isaac and Masika: Our iPods were very important to take that helped keep us in contact with our friends in Canada.

Canaan: I took my hockey stick so I was able to practise my shots. I taught my new friends how to play.

Shirley: *Tell us about your house in Blantyre, Malawi. I understand it is called Canada House.*

Isaac: There was a gate to enter and a fence with razor-sharp wire surrounding the yard and house.

Masika: We each had our own bedroom and our beds had nets around to cover us at night. That was to keep the mosquitos from biting us when we were sleeping.

Canaan: There was a big yard and one day our guard killed a snake with his machete.

Shirley: *What were your school days like?*

Isaac: We went to the International School that was close by and the school day started at 7:15 a.m.! Our studies were pretty much like those in Canada. We spoke English but learned a bit of Chichewa, the local language, as well.

Canaan: We wore uniforms. The boys wore a collared shirt and trousers and the girls dresses.

Masika: There was a pool at the school and we went swimming a lot because it was very hot. December was really hot with temperatures ranging from 95 to 107 degrees Fahrenheit. I didn't like it that hot!

Shirley: *Tell us about the friends you made and what you did together.*

Isaac: We had to stay in the CCAP(church of Central Africa) compound, but we had fun playing with the neighbourhood kids and other expat kids as well. It was hard to go into the streets as there were so many poor people always running up to sell us something or beg for money or food from us.

Canaan: There was a friend about my age and he was always catching geckos so we had fun playing with them.

Shirley: *Tell us about the church you attended with your parents.*

Canaan: The service was very long! There were lots and lots of people.

Isaac: Music was a big part of the service and it was very loud sometimes.

Masika: I liked all the singing and dancing.

Shirley: *What were some special outings you had?*

Isaac: Our family went on a safari in Majete. We saw elephants at a watering hole, which was amazing. We didn't catch a glimpse of the lion that we were hoping to see.

Masika: We took a trip to Mzuzu to meet some of my relatives. I was happy to meet my aunt and cousins.

Isaac: I also got to meet some staff at the Ministry of Hope orphanage where

Remembering

Janet Gowanlock,
Knox Burgoyne WMS
Burgoyne ON

Velma Willis
Knox Presbyterian Church
Cannington ON

Miriam Krieg
St. Andrew's WMS
Kitchener, ON

Mary Sylver
Agnes Tolmie Evening Auxiliary WMS
St. Andrew's,
Southampton ON

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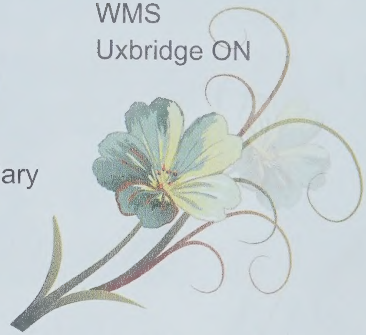

I lived before my parents adopted me. Some of the nannies actually remembered me!!

Shirley: *Do you have any concerns for your friends you met in Malawi? What might we in our church in Canada do for them?*

Canaan: We pray for our expat friends who don't know Jesus and we also pray for all the people in Malawi who don't have enough food to eat.

Masika: We try to be very careful about what we eat and not waste any food when we think of others who don't have enough. It was really hard to see the people who needed surgery, physiotherapy and food at the Ndirande Handicapped Club where our Mom worked.

Isaac: We also pray for the prisoners who Daddy met while working in the prisons. We pray at night that they would have enough to eat and that they might be able to see their families again. Some have been in prison without even going to court or having a trial. At Christmas, our family gave money to PWS&D to support projects in Malawi and that makes us feel like we are helping people there.

Shirley: *I know many congregations in The Presbyterian Church in Canada have raised funds to help with projects while your family lived in Malawi. It sounds like you children would ask us to keep up with those donations and not forget the people in Malawi! Thank you kids! It was wonderful to hear of your experiences!*

Coming Soon...

to a group near you.

WMS Annual Mailing: In late August or early September, your WMS group will receive copies of our annual mailing. It will include our newsletter, bi-annual report, auditor's report, information about the new Together We Can! projects and much more.

Glad Tidings Mailing: If you are a *Glad Tidings* contact, you will receive your *Glad Tidings* renewal package in early September. It will include your current list of subscribers, a poster, a sample of *Glad Tidings*, and all the information you need to renew your group subscription for 2018! Individual subscribers will receive their renewal forms in late September.

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by Christine Ball

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Glad Tidings

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I expect many of us have been through them—dry days of the soul. Moments, days, even months or years, where our faith is flat, even gone, and we don't know how to begin again. Sometimes, there has been a tragedy that has caused this, but most often, life has just gotten in the way of faith.

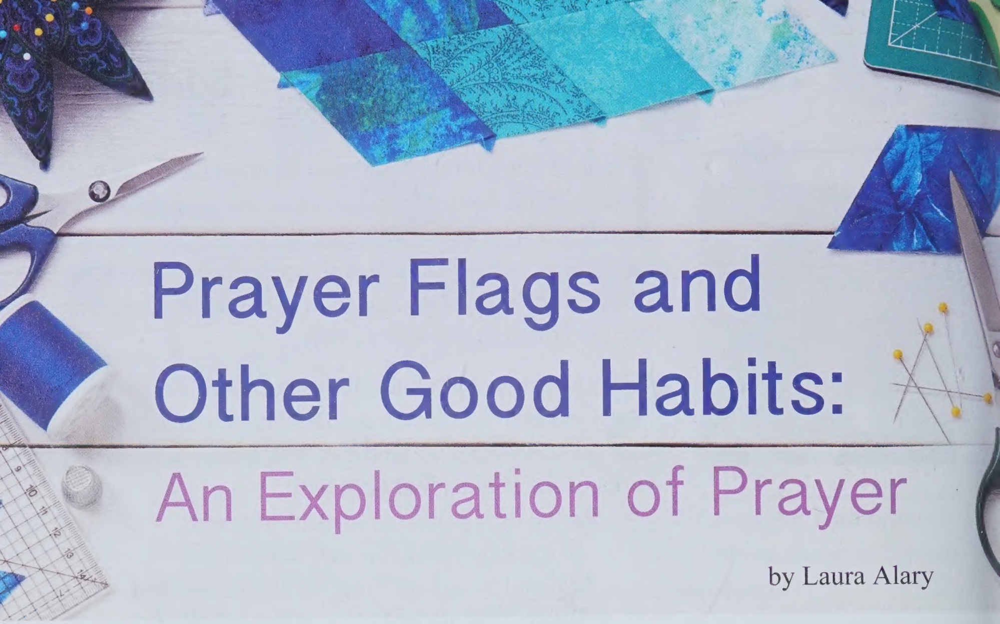
Sometimes, I am left longing for those days when God feels so close I can feel his presence, like arms wrapped around me. Yet, sometimes the words of the Psalms feel very real:

> As the deer pants for streams of water,
> so my soul pants for you, my God.
> My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
> When can I go and meet with God?
> (Psalm 42:1–2, NIV)

Some days I try to pray, but my words just feel lost. It is in times like these, that I need to return to a tried and true method of prayer for me. A breath prayer is a rhythmic disciplined prayer, a word or phrase repeated while I focus on just sitting—sitting in God's presence. For me, I set a timer, and I often have something tactile in my hands, a rock or prayer beads, to help me keep my focus. This is a prayer that connects me to God and renews me.

I know that others turn to the Psalms as their prayer during these dry times. Some participate in a spiritual retreat. For others, there are hymns and spiritual songs, or they turn to prayers written by others when they have no words. For others, it might be trying something new, such as adding a creative outlet to their prayers, or getting out into God's amazing creation.

In this month's *Glad Tidings*, you will read some articles on different ways people pray. I love learning how others feed their soul and connect to God. This Fall, as life happens, take time to pray. Whether it is your usual way to connect with God, or you try something new, pray. Whether your faith is on fire, or you are experiencing a dry day of the soul, pray. Pray to the God that has promised to never leave you or forsake you. Pray.



Prayer Flags and Other Good Habits:

An Exploration of Prayer

by Laura Alary

Habits of Mind

I am sitting on the floor, surrounded by scraps of fabric.

There are a million other things I could—and perhaps should—be doing right now. But I have chosen this for a reason. At the moment I am sifting through bits and pieces, looking for a colour or pattern that suggests courage. Something deep red, perhaps. Or purple. A very happy shade of orange is already speaking to me of joy. By my left knee, a jumble of greens sits waiting.

I am making prayer flags.

Rooted in Tibetan tradition, prayer flags have recently become popular around the world. The idea is simple enough. You design and sew (or paint) strings of flags which represent your hopes and intentions. When you hang them outside where they can flutter in the breeze, they become a visible expression of prayer, not so different from clouds of fragrant incense.

This is all part of an attempt to deepen and expand my practice of prayer. I am trying to cultivate some new habits.

Sometimes, it feels like my life revolves around habits. I try to curb the bad ones. *No more eating chips before bed. Quit checking Facebook so often. Stop being so hard on yourself.* The good ones ceaselessly compete for more attention. *Keep the yoga mat unrolled and stretch first thing in the morning. Do your push-ups. Drink more water*. Hardest of all is trying to cultivate habits in my children. *Pick up your clothes and put them in the drawer. Turn off the lights. Clear your dishes. And for* *goodness sake, when you use the last of the toilet paper, replace the roll!*

More often than not, I am torn between the two poles of too much discipline and not enough. As a perfectionist, I tend to become discouraged and disheartened when I fail to live up to my own expectations. Not trying at all sometimes feels easier than facing my own judgment.

But these habits I am trying to cultivate now are too important to give up on. These are habits of mind. I am trying to change not only what I do, but how I think, and see. I am trying to learn how to pray always and in all ways. So I have adopted a new motto from The Rule of St. Benedict: *Always we begin again.*

And I have turned to ritual to help me.

The Transforming Power of Ritual

Ritual—symbolic action—has great transformative power. It engages the imagination, moving us from the purely intellectual to a deeply personal and heart-felt way of knowing. Ritual takes what is external and makes it internal. This is what happens when we gather around the table to share bread and wine, and the universal love and grace of God mysteriously satisfies our own particular hunger. But ritual can also move in the opposite direction, giving outward shape to our deepest desires, hopes, and questions.

All my life I have been drawn to prayer forms which use words. Chief among these is lectio divina, the contemplative reading of short passages of scripture. As we read and ruminate on a brief text, we spiral deeper from listening, to wondering, to responding, to resting.

We begin lectio divina by listening for a word or phrase that stands out or "shimmers" for us. Then we sit with the phrase and pay gentle attention to the feelings, thoughts, and memories it stirs. Next, we ask ourselves what those feelings and thoughts might be summoning us to become and do. Finally, we let it all go and simply rest in the loving presence of God.

When practised regularly, these four movements of lectio divina gradually become a sacred rhythm that shapes our awareness—how we look and listen for the presence of God in every place and at every time. This is what I mean by a habit of mind.

My yoga teacher often says that the time we spend on the mat is training for how to live the rest of life with flexibility, strength, and balance. We could say the same about lectio divina. When we take time to sit and practise this way of praying, we are training ourselves to listen, pay attention, wonder, and open to new possibilities in every moment, not just the time we set aside for a formal practice of prayer.

Prayer Flags: What and Why?

In her beautiful book, Lectio Divina: The Sacred Art, Christine Valters Paintner reminds us that the Spirit speaks in many ways—not just through the words of scripture. She stretches the definition of a sacred text to include art, poetry, music, dance, nature, and dreams. Whatever we choose to contemplate, if we do so with the intention of listening for and being open to the Spirit, this is prayer.

Hence the prayer flags.

I must admit I got off to a rocky start. I began by browsing Pinterest (another dangerous habit) looking for inspiration. But there was simply too much out there and I quickly became distracted and overwhelmed. Deciding to limit myself to what was already at hand, I unearthed a box of fabric, dug out my sewing box, and settled down.

My first plan was to base my flags on the fruits of the Spirit. But somehow that evolved into creating flags, which represented other characteristics I want to cultivate in my life.

I asked myself some questions: What qualities do I respect and value? What do I already possess? What do I need more of? How might I invite this into my life? What gifts do I already have that I can offer in new ways to the people around me? To the world?

After pondering these things for a while, I came up with a collection of attributes: Courage. Compassion. Creativity. Openness. Calm. Acceptance. Gratitude. Wisdom. Humour. Kindness. Patience.

The next step was to sit with each quality until it revealed something of itself to me. I wondered: What does each quality look like? What colour or symbol best represents it?

By the power of imagination and the Spirit, my scraps of fabric are becoming a vehicle for prayer. Setting aside time and space to make them has focused my intention. Choosing images and symbols and colours has engaged my imagination. Sewing by hand is definitely slowing me down. With every stitch, the flags are becoming an expression of the longings and wonderings of my own heart.

Viriditas: The Greening Power of God

Recently, I learned a new word: viriditas. Well, it is new to me, but

Prayer is about transformation—not changing God, but changing ourselves.

it is really a very old Latin word meaning "greenness." In the 12th century, the Benedictine abbess and mystic Hildegard of Bingen used viriditas metaphorically to describe the greening of the soul—the vitality and freshness that wells up in the spirit when it is connected to the source and sustainer of life. For Hildegard, the colour green represented the life-giving power and universal love of God, which she saw in every bursting bud and blade of grass.

Viriditas reminded me of a character in one of my favourite novels, The Enchanted April by Elizabeth Von Arnim. One of a group of English women, who have rented a villa in Italy for the month of April, Mrs. Fisher has become staid and rather crabby, and has long since decided that her life is over and it is time for her to settle into old age. There is something, however, about being among the wisteria in the Italian sunshine, and spending her days with people who are growing to know and love her, that creates in the usually solitary Mrs. Fisher "the very odd and exciting sensation of going to come out all over in buds."

Sternly she tried to frown the unseemly sensation down. Burgeon, indeed. She had heard of dried staffs, pieces of mere dead wood, suddenly putting forth fresh leaves, but only in legend. She was not in legend. She knew perfectly what was due to herself. Dignity demanded that she should have nothing to do with fresh leaves at her age; and yet there it was—the feeling that presently, that at any moment now, she might crop out all green.

The source of this odd sensation is the transforming power of love—a love which transfigures the lives of everyone it touches. Greening love.

Transforming Prayer

Mrs. Fisher is in my mind as I reach for the pile of green scraps and continue to make my slow stitches. Spring is coming. Easter is coming. I wonder when and where I will feel that sensation of greening—of new life budding. I try to look more carefully. Already I can feel myself becoming more aware. Maybe new habits of mind are forming.

Prayer is about transformation—not changing God, but changing ourselves. Prayer opens our eyes to

Making these flags might not look like prayer, but it is ... I imagine my prayers carried out into the world on the breath of the wind. Where will they go? Who will they touch? What will return to me?

the life-giving presence of God within and around us. Prayer calls us to attend to the needs of others, and to be intentional about looking for ways we can embody the love of God in the world.

Making these flags might not look like prayer, but it is.

I open the window to let a breeze dance into the room. I have a few flags made now. As I hold them up to the light, I imagine my prayers carried out into the world on the breath of the wind. Where will they go? Who will they touch? What will return to me?

Time will tell. Right now I am content to keep sewing.

Recommended resources on different forms of prayer:

Alary, Laura. How Do I Prayer for Grandpa? Westminster John Knox Press, 2014.

Brazzeal, David. Pray Like a Gourmet. Creative Ways to Feed Your Soul. Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2015.

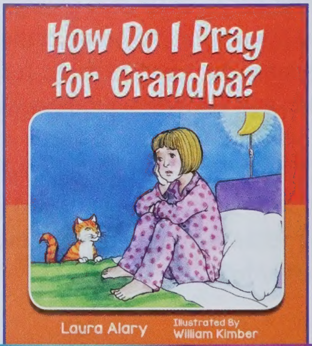
Hays, Edward. Pray All Ways: A Book for Daily Worship Using All Your Senses. Notre Dame, IN: Forest of Peace, 1981, 2007.

MacBeth, Sybil. Praying in Color: Drawing a New Path to God. Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2007.

Paintner, Christine Valters. Water, Wind, Earth and Fire: The Christian Practice of Praying with the Elements. Notre Dame: Sorin Books, 2010.

Paintner, Christine Valters. Lectio Divina: The Sacred Art. Transforming Words and Images Into Heart-Centered Prayer. Woodstock, VT: Skylight Paths, 2011.

Shannon, Maggie Oman. The Way We Pray: Prayer Practices from Around the World. Berkeley: Conari Press, 2001.



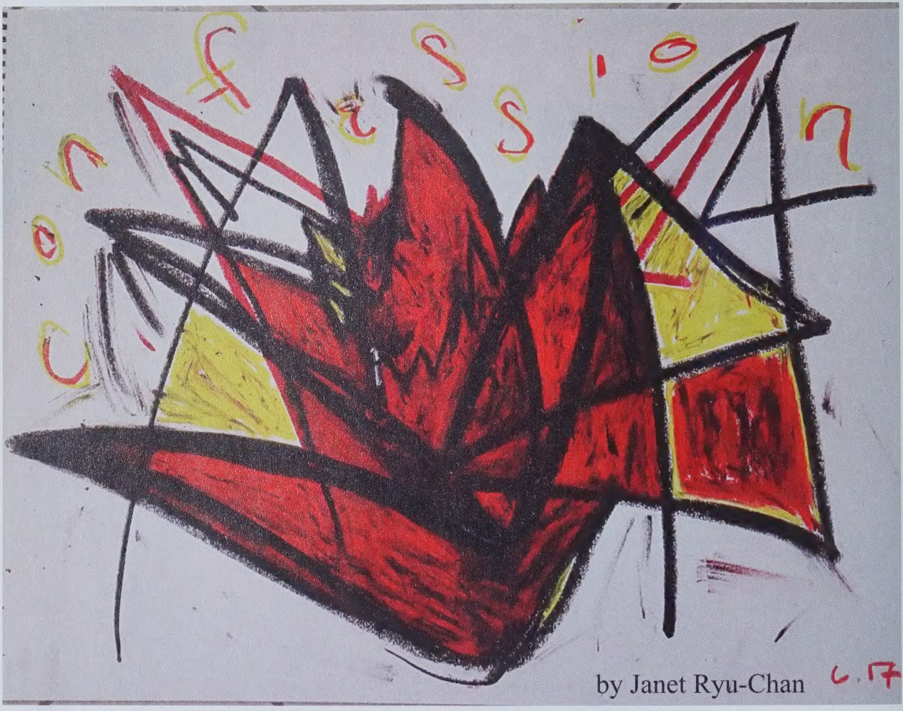
On the Wings of a Prayer

by Maureen E. Kowal

My prayers have wings
My prayers drift home to God
When my heart dances with joy
My laughter drifts
On the wings of a prayer
When I feel sad
My tears drift
On the wings of a prayer
In the hug of a friend
Love drifts
On the wings of a prayer
And God sends to my heart
A comforting sense of peace and covers me
Like a bird slowly closing its wings over her young
I find God is near
On the wings of a prayer

Art as Prayer

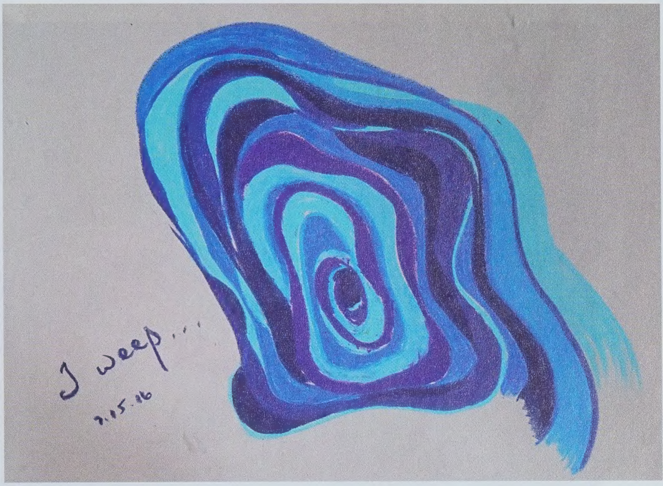
Confession



by Janet Ryu-Chan

Kneeling on a folded blanket before a blank sheet of paper, I savour its smoothness as my palms run over its white expanse. Silently, I give thanks for the gift under my hands as they move from the centre out in two concentric circles; my right hand moving clockwise and my left counter-clockwise.

Resting on the floor to my right are oil pastels. I delight in their rich, bold colours and relish the thought of digging them deep into the fibres of the paper that is 18" by 24". From



past experience, I know the soft texture of these sticks will bear my weight obligingly, as if they understand I have no words to bear witness to what is choking me. For a long time, I have been angry but terrified of naming it as such. For a long time, I have felt hurt but have been too petrified to acknowledge the depth of my pain. But my attempts to bury anger and hurt in the dark recesses of my being and numbing it with really good, expensive chocolate or episodes of The Originals (I like to joke that I'm married but not dead—albeit vampires are technically dead) only go so far. Lately, I have sensed that I will explode like Mount Vesuvius with wrathful vengeance or implode like a submarine that has gone past its "crush depth," resulting in massive water pressure that squashes metal piping and hull like a banana in a baby's tight fist. So, to truly live in the promise of new life, I surrender to my inherent need to confess the truth of what I am feeling.

Sometimes, confession is like vomiting. A truly unpleasant if not foul experience that once endured strangely leaves a person in a better frame of mind or state of being, even if it is but for a brief moment. Personally, and a little ironically, considering that I studied English Literature in university, I often find that words fail me when I feel most deeply or when my emotions threaten to overwhelm or suffocate me. But the desperate need to confess remains. The wonderful relief that the shades of a rainbow bring me is that I can express myself without first having to figure out what is in my heart or having to describe the emotion that plagues me. Consequently, my confessions are often visceral and raw, unpretentious and real.

I pick colours with my heart. What hue am I drawn to? What shade moves me? Sometimes I waffle between the spectrum of wavelengths in front of me but then instinct guides my hand and I pick up an oil pastel. Once I place the tip onto the sheet, I hold the paper down with my left hand and use all of my right arm to quickly drag the pigmented stick in all directions. During this particular

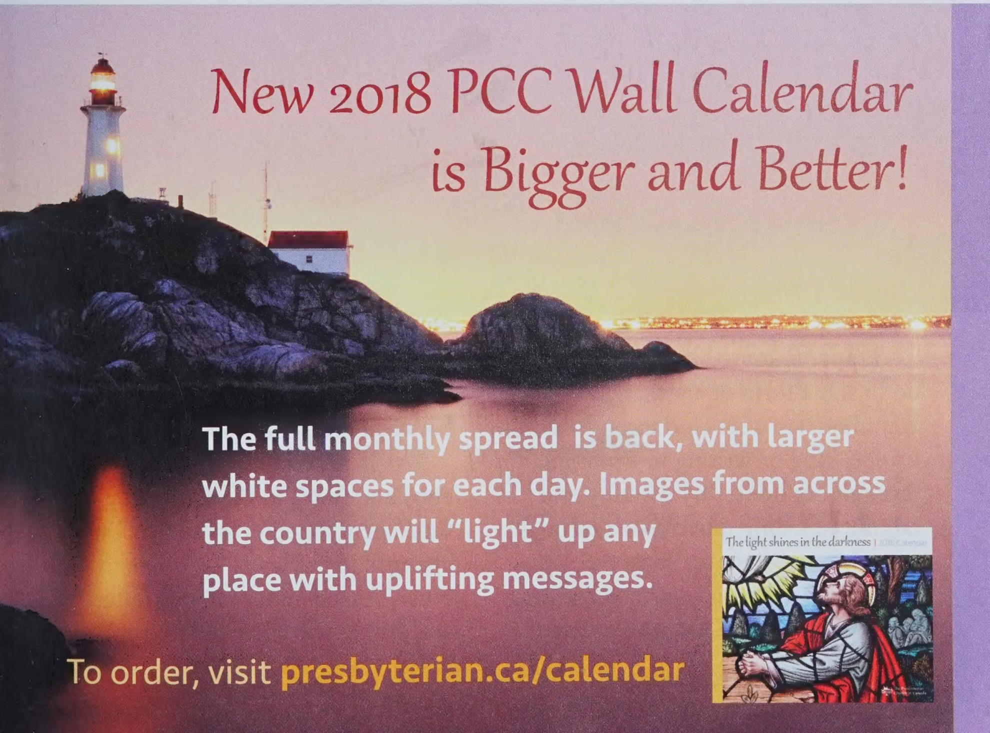
prayer, I switch hands and draw with my left too and hold down with my right. Once I have made my lines of black and carmine red, I am compulsively moved to congest some of the spaces between the lines. For some reason, the vermilion orange calls out to me and I saturate the paper fibres furiously with short strokes, smearing oil back and forth repeatedly in order to obliterate any white that tries to peek through.

Every now and again, I pause and look at my confession. Originally, I felt relief as I physically poured out all of my feelings and thoughts in colour; but about two thirds into my prayer, as I step back and stare at my ugly mess once again, my chest tightens and breathing becomes difficult. I realize that I have no assurance of forgiveness, nor hope present in what I have retched out onto the sheet. So I choose a lemon yellow and fill in some other spaces and then I pause again. I consider my confession for a little while. Something is missing… in the very centre; it is hope. Tiny and fragile though it might be, hope is the ever present sign of my faith in the God who raised Jesus from the dead to reveal to us a gracious love—more powerful than despair or fear, violence or death. And so, I press a sliver of white, a short vertical line, into the muddle of orange, red and black, to remind myself that I stand outside the empty tomb. I belong to Easter Sunday, a beloved child who looks at a risen LORD and not at a white shroud left inside a cave for the dead.

Confession is not something I enjoy. But I need it. When I am most hurt and angry, giving to God my pain and resentment is cathartic, liberating. Nevertheless, to be honest, I wish I only had to bring to light some things once; but, I have learned that there are times when I need to confess certain things over and over and over again. Otherwise, my feelings fester and when I least expect it, poison spews from my pores and my tongue. My body and words, they betray me.

In being human, I love. I feel. I get angry. I hurt. Life abundant, however, is mine through confession when I'm brave enough to tell the truth. In the mystery of the Holy Spirit, Emmanuel heals what is wounded and broken, although not always as quickly as I want or with the finality I desire. But if confession worked that way, it would become a utilitarian tool instead of an act that brings me into a closer relationship with the one who knows me by name and has made me marvelously so, body and soul.

A graduate of Knox College, Janet wishes the men in her life would play scrabble with her more often but she suspects that they would rather play an MMORPG or a MOBA with her. As they are at an impasse, episodes of White Collar have been a great compromise. On her own, Janet enjoys making cards and crocheting but would love to learn how to do pottery on a wheel someday.


New 2018 PCC Wall Calendar is Bigger and Better!

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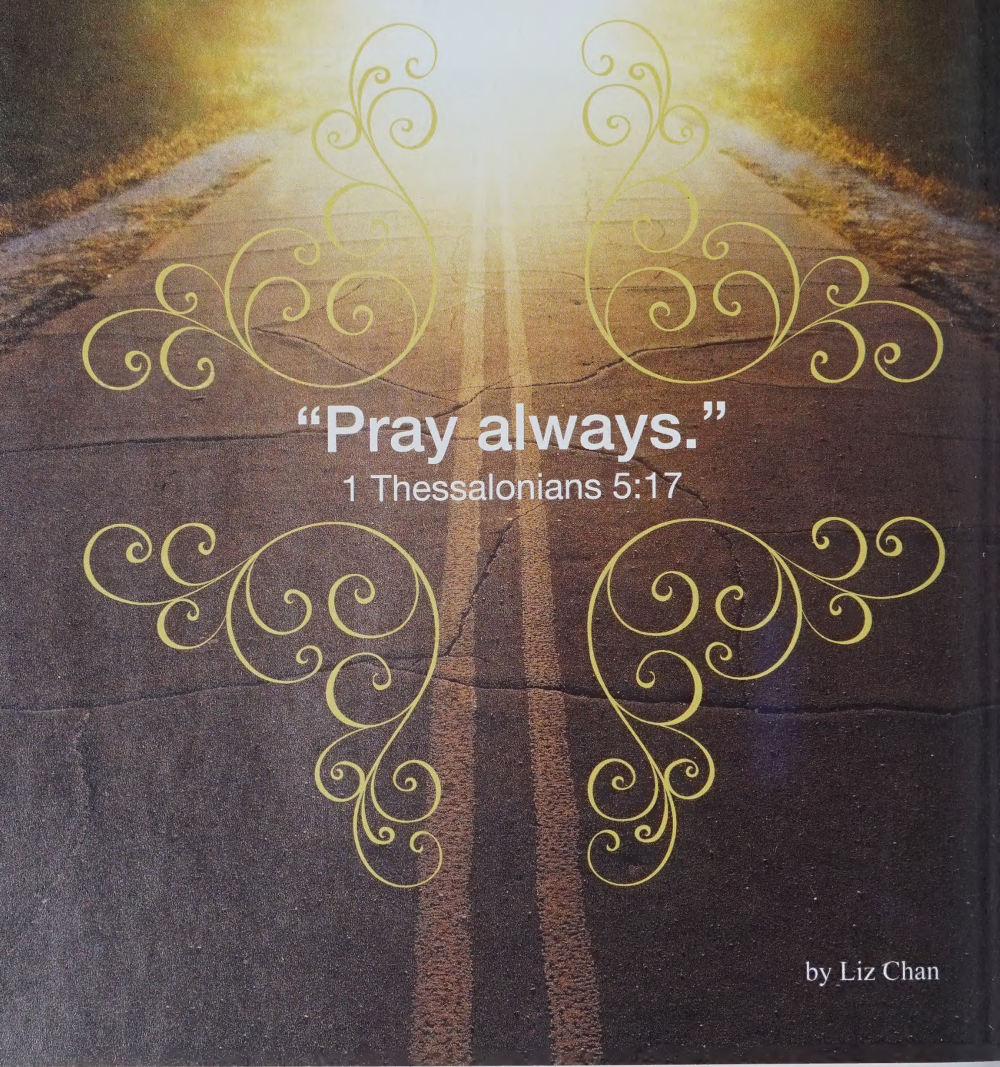


“Pray always.”

1 Thessalonians 5:17

by Liz Chan

Prayer is something we all do in some form or another. We communicate with God through words by speaking or writing in a journal, through our bodies by walking and talking or sitting quietly, and through our silence. Whatever form we use for prayer, its’ goal is to increase our intimacy with the God who created us and to maintain a relationship with Him. Prayer is a love relationship between our souls and God.

As in all relationships, there are ebbs and flows to the frequency of time spent together as well as the changes in the ways we relate to each other. As we mature in our faith, sometimes the tried and true ways of prayer that we have practised for years and even decades can become stale, and we desire new ways to connect our souls with Christ.

Praying with our breath is a form of prayer that encourages us to use something that we do all the time as a reminder to pray—breathing. We are born with the skill and the resources to be able to move from breathing in liquid in the womb to breathing in air. When a baby bursts forth into the world, the birth is often accompanied by screams and wails. They are learning to breathe in air for the first time. In and out. Over and over. Humans take about 16 breaths per minute. Breathing is something we don't often think about but it is an integral part of our daily lives. We breathe always just as we are called to pray always. In Genesis 2, when God was creating Adam, it says: "The Lord God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life." When we breathe, we can remember that it is by God's breath that we live.

One of the ways that we can use our breathing to pray is to find a quiet space and become aware of our breathing. In and Out—Inhale and Exhale. Breathing out something you would like to let go of and to give up to God, and Breathing in something that you desire from God. For example, I often pray, "Not my will" out and, "Your Will, O God" in. You might find another prayer helpful, such as "My Way," while breathing out and "Your way, Lord," as you inhale, or something as simple as, "Anxiety" out, and "Peace of Christ" in.

Another way to use our breath in prayer is what is aptly called Breath Prayer. Essentially this is a prayer that we pray that is individual to each of us and that is only as long as a breath. For this prayer, it is helpful to find a quiet space to listen to God. Imagine Him calling you by name— Laurie, Tom, Julie, Kyle. Then imagine Jesus asks you as he asks the blind man in Mark 10, "What do you want?" And you answer with: "Peace, Strength, Joy, Rest, Life, Relief ." Pray for whatever it is that your heart desires in this moment. Then think of the name that you call God in prayer: Father, Friend, Saviour, or Lord. And put the prayer together: "Help me rest in you, Jesus." It is most meaningful when it is only 6-8 syllables long and can be prayed in one breath. Use this prayer for as long as the Holy Spirit leads you. It may be weeks and it may be months until you discover a new breath prayer.

Prayer is a gift from the God, who created relationships to both reveal his love to us and mould us into the image of His son. Prayer heals; Prayer revives; Prayer changes us and our world. Praying with our breath is as easy as breathing. Pray always.

The Rev. Liz Chan is minister of Kars and Vernon Presbyterian churches.

World Day of Prayer

by Marilyn Fortin

Today, we are witnessing a decline in church membership and fellowship; increased unrest in the world due to diverging political ideals; acts of terrorism and war; natural disasters, such as drought, causing famine; extreme tornadoes and hurricanes, causing massive destruction and flooding, that can often be attributed to global warming; or acts of violence against women or our brothers and sisters, who choose to identify as other. This may all sound like we have nothing to hope for but in Matthew 19:26 we read, "but Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, with men this is impossible: but with God all things are possible." (KJV)

As Christians we are emboldened by the Holy Spirit to share the good news through prayer and action. There is a vibrant ecumenical grassroots Christian prayer community at work in about 170 countries around the world, called the World Day of Prayer. This global ecumenical movement is led by Christian women, who welcome all to join in prayer and action for peace and justice on the first Friday of March each year.

Come, close your eyes and add your prayers as day breaks:

Morning will come first on the islands of Tonga, in the South Pacific. For 24 hours the sun will rise and ride over lush jungles and stark deserts, alpine meadows, and rocky seacoasts. The brightness of its light will awaken us in rural villages and teeming cities. All day long we will come to wooden pavilions in the open air; to rural churches nestled in valleys; to senior homes, hospitals, and jails; to suburban churches and parish halls; to meeting rooms of many kinds; and to soaring cathedrals in the midst of great cities. We will embrace, sing, and pray—sharing a worship service that brings us the life and faith of Christian sisters far from us. As we follow the sun in its 24-hour journey, we can see in our mind's eye the tens of thousands of local groups coming together to pray. When the last light of the sun fades from Samoa and the north-western areas of Alaska, the "Amen" heard from those communities will close our circle of prayer for the world. (As prayed by Eileen King, Executive Director, World Day of Prayer International Committee, 2007.)

Experiencing the World Day of Prayer service from a different country's perspective each year helps us to realize where God is calling us during that 24-hour time period. We hold another's issues, hopes, and dreams in prayer. Prayer keeps us connected not only within our ecumenical community, but also with our inter-faith community as a shared relationship in helping women touched by injustice.

The origins of World Day of Prayer date back to the nineteenth century when Christian women of the United States and Canada initiated a variety of cooperative activities in support of women's involvement in mission at home and in other parts of the world.

Prayer is essential to opening our hearts to hear the word and will of God. It is through prayer that we build up our faith in Jesus. Prayer can make a profound difference in our world when we listen to God and one another to answer the call to "informed prayer and prayerful action."

Tens of thousands of women gather from different churches for the World Day of Prayer service in their local community. This service is written by women of a different country each year who are dedicated to a common task and to a shared vision. These women express their faith in Jesus Christ and the Bible through prayer, worship, and action. Countries that use the World Day of Prayer service are called to be faithful to the worship service and to the women who wrote it in order to allow their voices to be heard. An important aspect of this ecumenical Christian prayer community is that it encourages the leadership of women in preparation and coordination of the service.

Our prayer community considers itself global because we are local everywhere. Committees come together in preparation for the service and feel revitalized as they foster an ecumenical relationship that nurtures all who participate and experience the World Day of Prayer service. This worship service is a gift from the writer country and receiving it is a spiritual process.

The World Day of Prayer International Committee (WDPIC) meeting is held every three to five years. Besides the usual function of executive business and elections, this is the meeting where an ecumenical group of women will prayerfully discern World Day of Prayer writer countries, Bible passages, and themes for the next seven years. From its beginning, each service takes about three years to prepare.

The importance of the World Day of Prayer service is evidenced in the WDPIC annual Journal as we read about actions attributed to prayer services from 98 countries in 2016. An estimated 22,415 services were held in 95 languages, including versions in Braille or large print. Approximately 1,048,092 people attended the celebrations.

Global offerings:

- Will empower women, children, youth, and people with disabilities through education, mentoring, shelter, food programs, trauma counselling, hospital care, orphanages and prison visitations;
- Support people displaced by war or natural/human disasters; Syrian refugees in Europe and Middle East; victims of domestic violence, human trafficking and sexual abuse, such as the comfort women in Asia;
- Provide care and medical supplies for people living with HIV and AIDS, breast cancer, drug addiction, diabetes, and dementia;
- Sustain the socio-political commitment for women's empowerment and race/gender justice; support migrant children, the homeless, and garbage collectors in Egypt;
- Promote Christian education for children and youth, women's ministries, clergy women, and women's theological formation and Bible Society initiatives;
- Build organizational sustainability of the World Day of Prayer in local communities, and in the writer countries; and provide for the regional and international coordination of

the ecumenical Christian prayer movement.

One of the questions that we hear is, "Do you have any proof that prayer is helping?" We reply with a resounding "yes" that prayer and action are helping! Each country will have three years of prayerful preparation. During that time, many events occur. For instance in World Day of Prayer 2014 Egypt; the world witnessed the Arab Spring, an uprising against the government of Egypt, and in World Day of Prayer 2016 Cuba, we saw some sanctions and the embargo by the USA lifted against Cuba.

In 2018, the World Day of Prayer community will pray with Suriname. The theme is All God's Creation is Very Good!

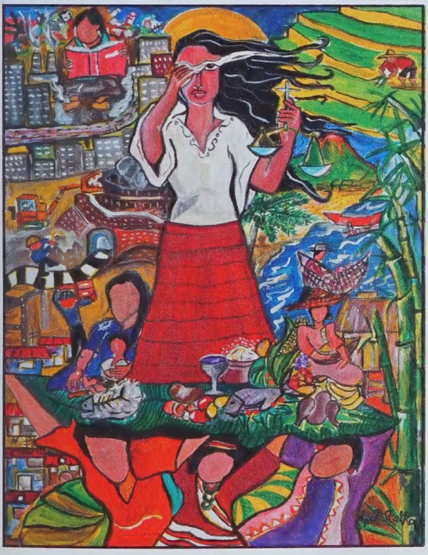
Marilyn Fortin is the Regional Representative of the Caribbean/ North America and Vice-Chairperson of the World Day of Prayer International Committee. She lives in Belleville, ON.

2017 World Day of Prayer Art

The image for the 2017 service was titled, *A Glimpse of the Philippine Situation.* This is a statement from the artist.

My name is Rowena "Apol" Laxamana-Sta.Rosa. I am 32 years old, a full time mother/housewife, and a freelance illustrator. I am a United Methodist Church member and currently reside in Cavite, Philippines.

I love to draw women as my subject, because it reflects the struggles of being a woman - being a mother for her children and being a wife for her husband. All women are beautiful; observing different emotions and gestures helps me to create my piece. Women empowerment motivates us to be strong and fight through our struggles.



God gave the Philippines abundant resources, both human and material. God is the great provider and provision is for all of creation. This is God's display of economic justice in contrast to the economy where the strong and powerful take God's resources for themselves and their families. The kingdom of God provides for all, even for those who do not acknowledge it.

Call to Prayer

O God of love, justice and mercy,

We confess that sometimes our lives do not reflect your desire for justice. Often we fail to recognize injustice and when we do see it, we easily excuse it as—that's just the way life is, or we blame the victim for their misfortune, or we believe we are powerless to bring about change.

Forgive us for our blindness, our judgmental attitude, and our lack of faith. Keep us from turning a blind eye, from covering our ears, or hardening our hearts to the cries of those who are oppressed and treated unfairly.

Holy Spirit, empower us with wisdom and courage to be the feet and hands of Jesus, the One who died serving others.

We pray for hope to be restored to women touched by injustice:

- women who suffer violence in their own homes,
- indigenous women who fear for the safety of their daughters who are missing, and for the comfort of those mothers whose daughters have been murdered, and
- women and girls caught in sex trafficking who can find no way out.

May our homes and our churches always be safe places for all people.

May the God of all compassion be reflected not just in our deeds, but also in our words.

We pray for those in authority over us at all levels of government that they would seek to serve others and do what is right in your eyes.

Make me a channel of your peace.

In the name of Jesus, Prince of Peace, Amen.

Written by the Rev. Shirley DeMerchant, President, Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada

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"Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy."

(Proverbs 31:8,9)

Praying with Children

by Colleen Wood

It seems now, that as my children get older, I am almost stunned at their ability and desire to pray. Even at 11-years-old, my son still wants his bedtime ritual of prayer and a song. (I am sure I have now sung the Aaronic blessing well over 5000 times since my children have been born!) My daughter loves to pray out loud, and is amazing at praying for friends who are in need.

Yet, for all us, child or adult, some days, our prayer life might feel a need for something new. Here are a few suggestions for praying with children, many that you can try yourself!

Joy and Junk
Most days on the way home from school, my children tell a 'joy' and a 'junk' from their day. This is a perfect way to lead into prayer time too. We can take a moment to thank God for the joy of day and ask him to be with us in the junk.

Prayer Basket
Create a prayer basket for prayer requests. All you need is a small basket, a mason jar, even a sand bucket, slips of brightly coloured paper, and a pencil or pen. Encourage your family to write prayer request as they think of them during the week. Once a week, perhaps after dinner, take the prayer requests out and pray for them all. As an alternative, write prayer requests on a chalk board during the week and after you pray for them, you can erase them knowing you have given them to God.

Sing
Sing a prayer. Whether it is the traditional Johnny Appleseed before dinner or a praise song at bed time, kids love to share their love of God in song. Ask your children or grandchildren to teach you songs from Vacation Bible Camp, Sunday school, or overnight camp.

Praying in Colour

For creative children, praying in colour can be a great new way to offer prayers to God. All you need is paper, a pen, and coloured markers, pencils, or even crayons. Sybel Macbeth wrote a great book on praying in colour, and basically describes it as: "Praying in colour = prayer + doodling." She suggests you begin by writing your name for God on paper. Then you can add shapes and doodles as you ask God to be in your prayer time. You can then write names of those who you would ask God's prayer for. There are great free resources to help you get started at www.prayingincolor.com or the book can be ordered online.

Morning Prayers

Responsive prayers don't have to be something you save for church. Create a morning ritual with your children as you leaving each morning for work or school.

Here are a few ideas:

You: This is the day that the Lord has made,
Children: let us rejoice and be glad in it.

You: The Lord is with me,
Children: I will not be afraid.

You: I can do all things,
Children: through Christ who strengthens me.

You: Give thanks to the Lord for he is good,
Children: his love endures forever.

A-B-C Prayer

For younger children, you can share a letter prayer to make prayer fun. Choose one letter each day and thank God for things that start with that letter. Today, we are going to thank God for things that start with "A". We thank God for apples, airplanes that let us travel to see Grandma, and ants because we like to watch them outside.

Prayer Chain

Create a prayer chain as a family that you can add to each night. Cut out several strips of coloured paper and when you say your prayer, write out your prayer in a word or short phrase on that slip of paper. Every night, you will add to your chain.

Band-aid Prayer

Theresa McDonald-Lee, co-director of Camp Kintial, suggests a wonderful band-aid prayer to pray with children. When you are praying for someone who is in pain (someone who is ill, being picked on, or someone who didn't make the hockey team), say a short prayer that God will be with them and ask God to heal their hurt. Then, place a band-aid on your child and ask them to wear it for a day as a reminder to continue to pray for this person.

Jesus is the Light

Don't be scared to use a candle with children. With supervision, children can light and appreciate candles in prayer. As you light the candle, remind children that Jesus is the light of the world and is with us when we pray. When you have finished the prayer, have children put the candle out. Invite them to watch the smoke go out, and you can remind them that as the smoke goes out, God's spirit goes with us. (With very young children you can use a battery operated candle, or place your candle in a closed lantern.)

Thanksgiving Journal
Start a thanksgiving journal with your children. Each day, have them write or draw one thing they are thankful for.

Silence
Use silence in prayer with children. In a very short time of silence, 15-20 seconds, encourage children to tell God what they are sorry for and ask for forgiveness. I find this is especially important now that my children are getting older. You can also tell children that sitting with God in silence can allow God to talk to us. Again, encourage children to sit for 15-20 seconds to listen for any messages from God.

Technical Prayers
Older children can be encouraged to create a prayer slide show or video.

Prayer Tower
Build a prayer tower. Using wooden blocks, you can write your prayers on building blocks and build up your prayer tower.

Pray out Loud
Let children hear you pray during the day. Occasionally, when we pass by a traffic accident, I will say a prayer out loud for the people involved. As you drive or walk past a school, you can say a prayer. If you see a person asking for money, once you are past, you can say a quiet prayer. Show children how prayer can be incorporated into their daily life.

Prayer Book
Create a book of your favourite prayers for children. It can include graces, bedtime prayers, sung prayers, and the Lord's Prayer. Children like to be able to choose their favourite to read with you. (You can find lots of prayers for children online, or ask your minister or Sunday school teacher for some suggestions.)

Vacation Prayer Book
We have a vacation prayer book. The first page has a written prayer that we say before we leave on a vacation—usually as we are pulling out of the driveway. As we are on vacation, the children draw and share stories of our vacation in this book. This is also where we keep our 'flat' Jesus. A few years ago, our Sunday school had children colour a cut out of Jesus that they could take with them to remind them that Jesus goes with them in the summer, wherever they may be at. The church also encouraged the children to send pictures of their adventures with 'flat' Jesus over the summer. We still bring our flat Jesus along as a reminder that God is with us wherever we are.

We praise you, O God

Thanksgiving Worship

by Christine Ball

Call to Worship: (Psalm 100)

Leader: Enter God's gates with thanksgiving and God's courts with praise.
People: Give thanks to God and bless His name.
Leader: Let us make a joyful noise in praise of the Lord!
People: Let us worship the Lord with gladness.
All: With hearts full of thanks, we come to worship,
for you, O LORD, are good.

Praise arises from hearts filled with gratitude for what God has done for us. Our time of worship almost always begins with hymns of praise and prayers of adoration. Open your hearts and minds to the awesome power of God at work in your lives and give God the glory.

Let us Pray:

God of creation, God of harvest; we come to worship and praise you.

You are the Creator of all that is; your handiwork is evident in the beauty of the countryside, the full heads of grain in the fields, the fragrance of fruit maturing on the tree. We give to you our thanks and praise.

Compassionate God, you bless the farmer, the seller and buyer of produce, the truck driver, the factory worker, the grocery store clerk. We give to you our thanks and praise.

Generous God, you provide for all of us. You give us food so delicious, full of taste and flavour. You allow us to feel the joy of eating and give us the delight of feeling a full belly when we feast. We give to you our thanks and praise.

Amid our celebrations, we may lose sight of the fact that you are the giver of the gifts and it is you who provides for us throughout all the years of our life. Forgive us when we complain instead of rejoicing in your gifts. Forgive us when we waste instead of sharing with others. Forgive us when we forget to thank you.

Help us to live each day with the attitude of thanksgiving and grant us hearts of love, strength to serve, and compassion for all your children. Amen

Hymn: #425, We praise you, O God

Introduction to Scripture:

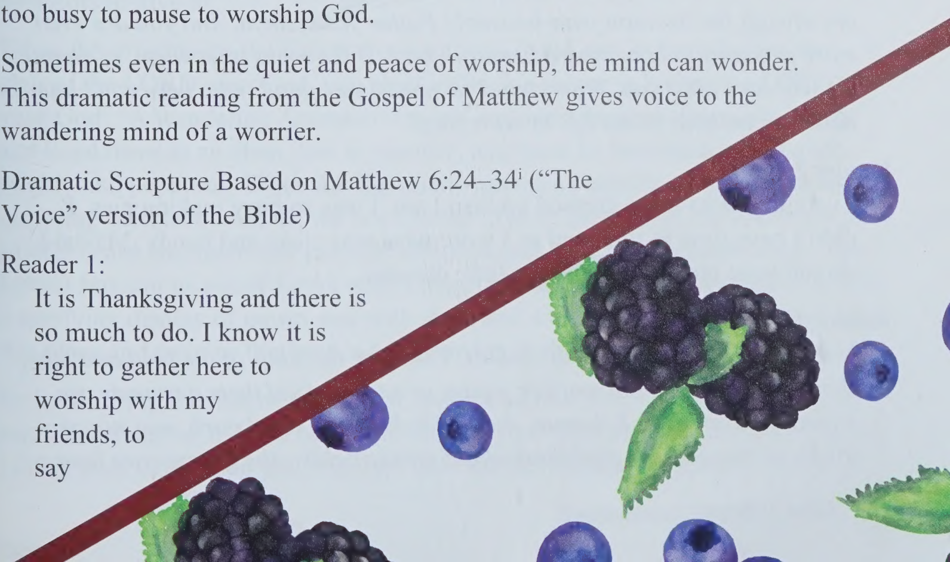
We can so easily become distracted from what is important by what is urgent. We spend our energy on things that are temporary and worry about things that will pass. We are busy and neglect the significant and enduring. We can even become too busy to pause to worship God.

Sometimes even in the quiet and peace of worship, the mind can wonder. This dramatic reading from the Gospel of Matthew gives voice to the wandering mind of a worrier.

Dramatic Scripture Based on Matthew 6:24–34[i] ("The Voice" version of the Bible)

Reader 1:

It is Thanksgiving and there is so much to do. I know it is right to gather here to worship with my friends, to say



thanks to God for our many blessings, but I cannot stop thinking about the shopping and menu planning that needs to be done before thanksgiving dinner is served.

Reader 2:

No one can serve two masters. If you try, you will wind up loving the first master and hating the second, or vice versa. People try to serve both God and money—but you can't. You must choose one or the other.

Reader 1:

What shall I serve the guests who are vegetarian? Shall I serve yams or potatoes? The children turn their noses up at broccoli; maybe if I make a cheese sauce, they will eat them. Thanksgiving was so much easier when you just put a ham in the oven.

Reader 2:

Here is the bottom line: do not worry about your life. Don't worry about what you will eat or what you will drink. Don't worry about how you clothe your body. Living is about more than merely eating, and the body is about more than dressing up. Look at the birds in the sky. They do not store food for winter. They don't plant gardens. They do not sow or reap—and yet, they are always fed because your heavenly Father feeds them. And you are even more precious to Him than a beautiful bird. If He looks after them, of course He will look after you. Worrying does not do any good; who here can claim to add even an hour to his life by worrying?

Reader 2:

Everyone looks more dressed up than I am. I was so busy making pies, I didn't have time to iron, and so I wore what was clean and handy. Maybe I should have put on something a little dressier.

Reader 1:

Nor should you worry about clothes. Consider the lilies of the field and how they grow. They do not work or weave or sew, and yet their garments are stunning. Even King Solomon, dressed in his most regal garb, was not as lovely as these lilies. And think about grassy fields—the grasses are here *now, but they will be dead by winter. And yet God adorns them so radiantly. How much more will He clothe you, you of little faith, you who have no trust?*

Reader 2:

My goodness, I am distracted. God help me. I know there will be plenty to eat and all the guests are happy to be gathered around the table and just be together. God, calm my heart so I can hear your word for me today.

Reader 1:

So do not consume yourselves with questions: What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear? Outsiders make themselves frantic over such questions; they don't realize that your heavenly Father knows exactly what you need. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and then all these things will be given to you too.

Reader 2:

So, do not worry about tomorrow. Let tomorrow worry about itself. Living faithfully is a large enough task for today.

Old Testament Scripture: Deuteronomy 6:1–11 (NRSV)

When you have come into the land that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess, and you possess it, and settle in it, you shall take some of the first of all the fruit of the ground, which you harvest from the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and you shall put it in a basket and go to the place that the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his name. You shall go to the priest, who is in office at that time, and say to him, "Today I declare to the LORD your God that I have come into the land that the LORD swore to our ancestors to give us."

When the priest takes the basket from your hand and sets it down before the altar of the LORD your God, you shall make this response before the LORD your God: "A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous. When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labour on us, we cried to the LORD, the God of our ancestors; the LORD heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. The LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power and with signs and wonders; and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey.

So now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground that you, O LORD, have given me." You shall set it down before the LORD your God and bow down before the LORD your God. Then you, together with the Levites and the aliens who reside among you, shall celebrate with all the bounty that the LORD your God has given to you and to your house.

Hymn: #802, For the Fruits of all Creation

Meditation

Our Christian celebration of Thanksgiving is rooted in the Old Testament Jewish festival of Sukkoth or First Fruits. In this passage, the Israelites, the descendants of Abraham and Sarah, stand on the edge of the Promised Land. This generation are the children of the slaves delivered from Egypt. They had grown to adulthood as nomads wondering the dessert for the past 40 years. They had learned to be totally dependent upon God to provide water and food—manna and quail.

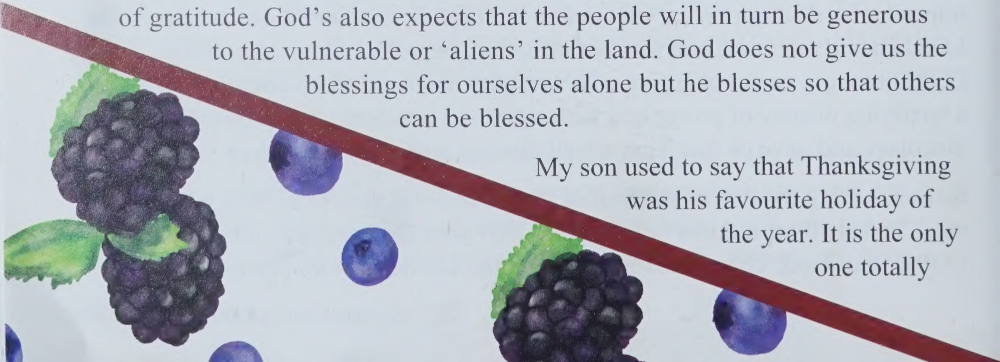
The writer of Deuteronomy reminded the people not to forget where they have come from: to remember their history, and to remember how God saved them from slavery and invited them into a relationship with him. They are blessed, saved, and provided for by God. In God alone, shall they place their trust. In Deuteronomy 6, they are reminded that when the time comes that they are well fed and have big houses, they are not to forget who they are.

And what does God require of them? The response of the people to God's saving act is to live a life of thankfulness and to give back to God the first and the best of the produce.

Jewish festivals are not just an occasion for feasting and rest from labour; they are a symbolic re-enactment of God's action. By acting out the historical experience of the God saving the people from slavery in Egypt, they themselves are saved. The people say: "Today, I declare to the Lord your God that I have come into the land that the Lord swore to our ancestors to give us. (Deut. 26:3) God brought us into this place and gave us this land—a land flowing with milk and honey. So now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground that you O Lord, have given me." (Deut. 6:10).

The presentation of the first fruits is only one aspect of the God's expectation of gratitude. God's also expects that the people will in turn be generous to the vulnerable or 'aliens' in the land. God does not give us the blessings for ourselves alone but he blesses so that others can be blessed.

My son used to say that Thanksgiving was his favourite holiday of the year. It is the only one totally



devoted to eating. In our culture, many people would agree with him. They don't understand that there is so much more to Thanksgiving than the big dinner. At Thanksgiving, we recognize our relationship with God, who is the source of our daily blessings. We do this in worship and praise. It is a sacred act and time of intentionally turning toward God.

> *"Earth's crammed with heaven,*
> *Any every common bush afire with God,*
> *But only he who sees, takes off his shoes;*
> *The rest sit around and pluck blackberries."*
> ~ *Elizabeth Barrett Browning*

When I first encountered this poem, its truth rang sure with my experience—of God and of blackberries.

Our family summer vacations were often spent visiting my husband's parents on their small farm in the Cowichan Valley on Vancouver Island. The little white house sits nestled in a valley facing Mount Tzouhalem. Compared with our busy life, visits to grandma and grandpa Ball's home is slow-paced. The day is shaped by gardening chores and nap times punctuated with many tea breaks. The children enjoyed exploring the barn, star gazing, flying a kite, taking naps, hearing the old stories over multiple cups of tea, and they picked blackberries. Lots of blackberries.

Their fascination with the blackberries is a wonder to their cousins and the locals. After all, the berry grows practically everywhere on Vancouver Island. For these two city kids from Ontario, the humble blackberry is a true wonder of God's creation. We picked the thorn-less cultured berries on the farm and then cleared the bushes growing along the roadside. If we got hungry on a hike, we snacked on blackberries. Our vacation pictures document our appreciation for the blackberries. There are selfies of the picking, numerous portraits of the perfect berry, close-ups of pails of picked berries, purple-stained hands, baked blackberry crumble, blackberry jelly, even pancakes, ice-cream, and cereal adorned with blackberries.

The poem by Elizabeth Barrett Browning reminds me of our blackberry adventures. We were truly grateful to be able to visit during the season of ripe

fruit. Even if the locals took the blackberries for granted, we did not. We felt true joy in eating the fruit and recognized it as a gift from God. Since we are in the practice of saying grace—we did say thanks to God—at least for the berries that made it to the dining room table.

A life of true and conscious thanksgiving goes beyond feeling happy or even saying grace. It is a thanksgiving that recognizes that we are in a relationship with the giver and creator. We are blessed and are asked to remember that blessing is to be shared. We were pleased to share our blackberry baking on our visits to the homes of other family members. Our joy of sharing our blackberry baking was contagious. It did not take long before we were hearing their stories and misadventures of picking berries.

I expect that it is in the sharing of our story and the joy of feasting together that we find we are on sacred ground and we recognize and experience God's generosity, not only in his acts in the past, but also in our lives in the present. God creates, God saves, God provides, every day.

Just as it was for the people of Israel, Thanksgiving today is a time for us to open our eyes to see what we so often take for granted. When we celebrate harvest thanksgiving, we recall the generosity of God who is the source of our blessing. Our response to this generosity is to live a life of gratitude and to share the blessing with others. When we share, we become the blessed people God has called us to be. This becomes our first fruit. Our offering back to God. This is how we live out our special relationship as God's chosen people.

Offering:

I have heard it said, "giving thanks is something I do after I say I believe."

In response to God's faithfulness, loving kindness and compassion, we offer back to God and to our neighbour and even strangers the finest of our labours and of our selves.

Prayer:

> Generous God; You created everything and all things are in your care. We know your blessings and in commitment to our Lord Jesus, we offer you ourselves and these gifts of the earth.
>
> Receive these our offerings and use them for your purpose of grace and peace in the world.
>
> In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Intercession:

Lord our God, giver of all good things, we join our hearts and voices in gratitude and thanksgiving for the abundance we enjoy in our lives. We thank you that you have loved us and entered our lives through covenants and through your son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

We receive love from others and we want to give such love to others. You teach us how to be a good neighbour. We are hopeful that your spirit will act through us to reach out to the world.

Our world is in great need of your action. We are humbled, Lord, that you call us to work for your kingdom on earth. Help us to take time from our hurried life to reach out to others in need. Grant us courage to step up and act when we see need.

We pray for those who are lonely, that they may receive the gift of hospitality and welcome. May all experience friendship and fellowship in the church and community.

We pray for those who are fearful. We pray for those places where violence and conflict rage unchecked. May they be comforted with your peace. May we have courage to share the good news and hope we have in Christ.

We pray for those who will not have enough to eat today. In this world of abundance, help us to share with others.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayers, Amen.

Hymn: #663, God whose giving knows no ending

Blessing:

May the God of seed time and of harvest,
The God of blackberries eaten and stories shared,
Bless you and uphold you this day and everyday.

Go in the name of God our Creator,
Jesus our Saviour and,
The Spirit our Comforter.
Amen.

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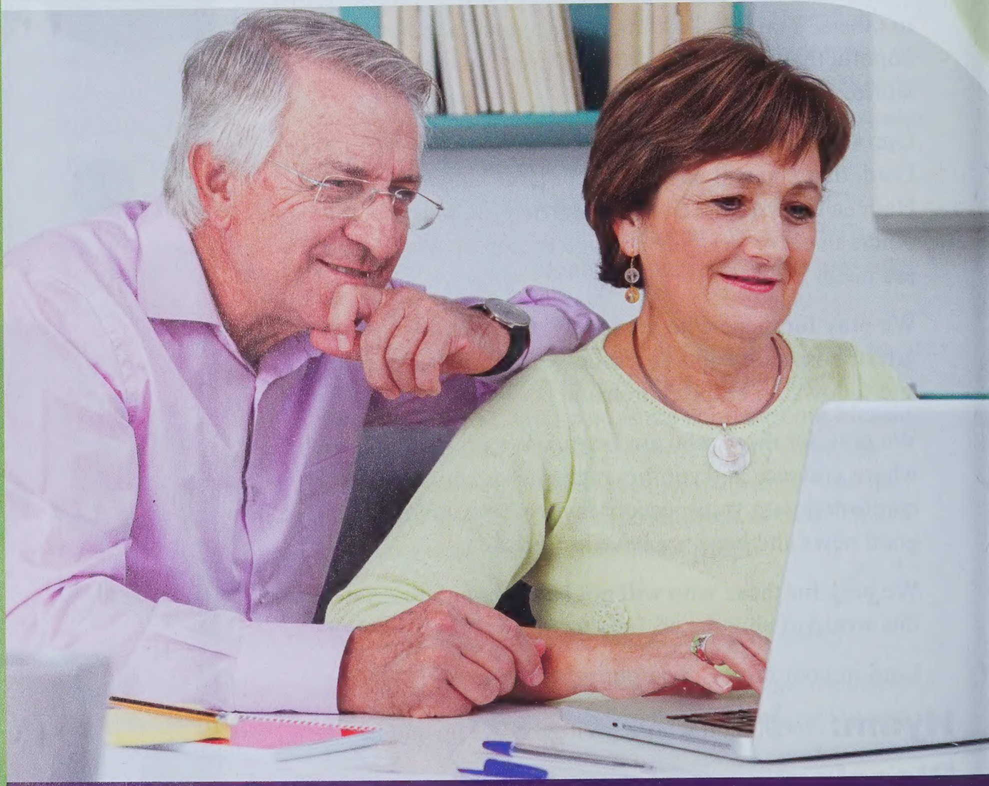

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1. Value of the shares & donation receipt	$50,000	$50,000
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3. Capital gain	$30,000	$30,000
4. Taxable gain (line 3 x 50%)	$15,000	$0
5. Donation tax credit (calculated at 46%)*	$23,000	$23,000
6. Tax on capital gain (line 4 x 46%)*	$6,900	$0
7. Net tax savings (line 5 – line 6)	$16,100	$23,000
8. Cost to make gift (line 1 – line 7)	$33,900	$27,000

*Rates vary by province

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Why Should We Apologize?

by Janet Brewer, Susan McLennan, and Joan Smith

Healing and Reconciliation Tour

Winnipeg Inner City Mission: (left to right) Sarah Kim, Joan Smith, Susan Currie, Margaret Mullin, Susan McLennan, and Janet Brewer

A number of WMS members attended the Healing and Reconciliation Tour that visited various locations around Winnipeg, Kenora, and Saskatoon from June 12 to 21.

In fact, 33 people (mostly from The Presbyterian Church in Canada) spent time with First Nations and Métis people listening to their stories and spending time in their company. We were greeted graciously, simply, and with great warmth.

Most of you know the story by now of the harm done to children and families by churches when they carried out the federal government's laws of removing young Indigenous children from their families and placing them in church-run residential schools, sometimes far away from their homes.

When children arrived at the residential schools, they were systematically stripped of their language, customs, and heritage by means that were sometimes cruel and brutal. Some children suffered illness, poor food, overworked and unhealthy conditions, physical and sexual abuse, and even death. There are many personal histories of these atrocities that have been recorded from the seven Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings that were held across Canada, ending in Ottawa in June 2015. The PCC residential schools operated from 1884 until the last was closed in 1969—a period of almost 100 years![1]

In 1994, The Presbyterial Church in Canada finally confessed and apologized for the harm done to the children from their experiences in the

Participants and friends

schools operated by the PCC.[2]

The above explanation is greatly simplified but the harm done is incalculable! Generations of people have been affected with some of the following results: families and communities are broken apart, drug and alcohol problems are rampant, and suicides and hopelessness happen all too often.

You might say, "Why should I apologize? I did not do this to anyone!" You are right—you, ***personally***, didn't do this, but the general population DID, perhaps not directly but by acceptance of the fact that this was going on and not making an attempt to stop it. We are responsible—our Church is responsible! Our apathy has created this generational problem for Indigenous peoples, and we are now responsible for making the changes necessary to ensure that it never happens again.

In Winnipeg, we visited the Winnipeg Inner City Missions and were hosted by the Rev. Dr. Margaret Mullin and her team. Some walked the streets with Vivian Ketchum to see the spots where the homeless 'live', where the local drug dealers spend time, the Thunderbird Centre, and other centres that support the people in the area. Some helped set up a rummage sale with Susan Currie, and others from the group visited Flora House and helped at an after-school program.

From Winnipeg, we bussed to Kenora and visited the PCC-supported Kenora Fellowship Centre (KFC). Yvonne Bearbull, Executive Director of the Centre, explained the situation in Kenora where many people with drug and alcohol problems are taken into the hospital and later released with no rehab program offered. They end up on the city streets and at the doors of KFC where they can get a meal, some quiet time, advice if they want it, temporary housing if there is space, and support from caring staff and volunteers.

On our first afternoon in Kenora, we had an opportunity to visit the last site of the Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School. There is no longer a building on the site but a memorial has been built. We had the privilege of spending time with elders Cathy Lindsay and Nancy Morrison and listening to their stories.

On, the second day, we visited Shoal Lake where some of us were able to walk to the site of the original location of the Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School. This was a very emotional time as we walked over the same ground as the children had done to see the area and monument erected in their memory.

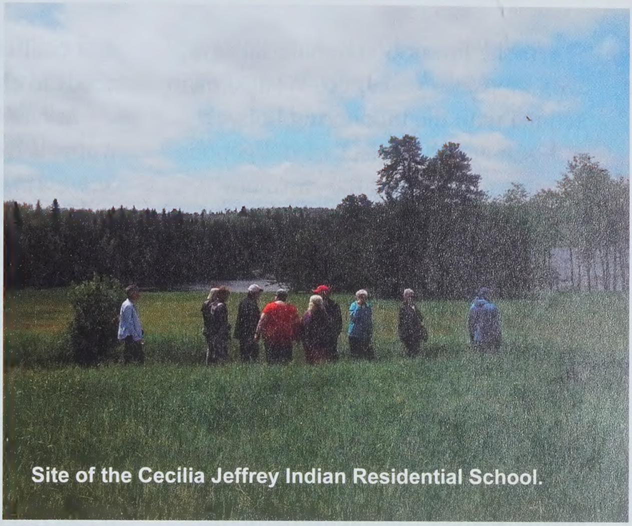
On the second morning, we cooked and served a hot breakfast to the elders of the community and sat with them asking questions about their lives and listening attentively.

Back in Winnipeg, we visited the University of Manitoba, specifically with people working with the ACCESS program at the university. This program helps Indigenous peoples enter university when they come in from their communities. Engineering and health professional students are encouraged to upgrade their academic skills, become adjusted to city life, and interact with students having the same background. Some students find that their university classes are larger than the whole community in which they formerly lived. The ACCESS program means that students who want to succeed have the support to do this.

That same morning, we visited the National Centre for Healing and Reconciliation at the university that will be the permanent home for all the statements, documents, and other materials gathered by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. In the afternoon, many of us visited the new Canadian Museum for Human Rights in downtown Winnipeg.

From Winnipeg, we travelled to Saskatoon and visited Bird Tail Reserve along the way. We were greeted with a barbecue when we arrived, giving us an opportunity to visit with local residents and to assist them with the raising of a large tent to temporarily replace their sanctuary that had had a fire. Bird Tail is just outside Birtle, MB, the location of the second Indian Residential School run by the PCC. The building still stands but we had to view it from a distance as the property is privately owned. After the happy celebration at Bird Tail with food, singing, and dancing,

Saskatoon Native Circle, Stewart Folster


Site of the Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School.

we were shaken to see the large abandoned building in Birtle, still hovering over the community with the sad memories of that place.

On the Sunday of our trip, some worshiped with the St. Andrew's, Saskatoon, congregation in the morning. All of us attended the Mistawasis First Nations on Sunday afternoon where we worshiped with the community and then enjoyed a feast together—there were probably 24 delicious pies for dessert! We were not able to reach the Mistawasis Memorial Presbyterian Church building as the road was impassible after some heavy rain but we did gather in the community centre with the children and adults, and also their minister, the Rev. Katherine Bretzlaff. We also had an opportunity to see their wonderful public school building.

On the following two days, we visited the Saskatoon Native Circle (SNC)[3] in downtown Saskatoon and the Wanuskewin Heritage Park on the outskirts of town. We were impressed with the art program offered to people at the SNC. All ages are welcome to come in off the street and create a painting, do a craft, or sit quietly in attractive surroundings. Their art director, Jennifer, patiently encourages each person to work at something at their skill level and challenges them to do more as they feel able. Children and adults blossom in this atmosphere and real talent is revealed in some. The second part to the store-front ministry is located next door where people are fed and the same space is used for worship. The Rev. Stuart Folster oversees this inner-city ministry.

As the promotional material says, "Six thousand years ago, Wanuskewin echoed with the thundering hooves of bison and the voices of Indigenous peoples from across the Northern Plains; the land still echoes with these stories that Wanuskewin is proud to share with the people." We were able to walk on these plains and imagine the communities coming and going in the area many long years ago, helped by the interpretive area where displays and art are exhibited.

Each night, we all met for prayer and debriefing—an opportunity to share our thoughts and impressions of our day and to pray together for a better understanding of the problems and issues facing First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. Our leaders, the Rev. Dr. John Vissers and David Phillips, encouraged us to think deeply and to share our concerns. Our sharing circles were times of tears and laughter. Each person was challenged to consider what needs to change and how we can help.

In one of our discussions, these words were shared—*Share Space–Share Time–Share Resources*—as a way to reconcile. TRC Commissioner Dr. Wilton Littlechild, recently, in a presentation at the University of British Columbia spoke of reconciliation. In thinking about reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians, he conceptualized it as two friends walking down railroad tracks. Where, if one tried to do it alone he would inevitably fall off, but by walking hand-in-hand they could walk for miles. "That's what reconciliation is about. Going forward, we need to support each other in this work. It's going to take all of us."[4]

Elder Terry at Bird Tail Reserve encouraged us all with his words, "It's worthwhile to reconcile."

Helping prepare a meal at the Anamiewigummig (Kenora) Fellowship Centre

Sarah Kim with friends of the Anamiewigummig (Kenora) Fellowship Centre

At the Mistawasis dinner following worship, there was a young girl who became exhausted with all the celebrations and, from a sound sleep in her grandmother's arms, was laid on the stage. This child slept in complete abandonment and trust of all the people talking and laughing around her. Children in residential schools had this trust stolen away from them. ***This is why we must apologize!***

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WMS trip participants

A Listening Heart

by Vivian Ketchum

I was at the Women's Gathering, Rooted In Love, event in Toronto in May—my first time attending the event. It was a church event and I was concerned about my reaction being around a church environment. I am a residential school survivor and it was never easy for me being in a church community.

Still, I wanted to see where the church was at in its reconciliation journey. I didn't have to wait very long to find out. I was greeted by an older lady, who seemed very anxious about how to begin her reconciliation journey. The lady knew me from the stories I had written in The Presbyterian Record. I asked her if I could hold her hand. The woman seemed puzzled by my odd request, but did as I had requested her to. I held her hand gently in mine and looked her in the eyes. I smiled at the elderly lady and told her she had taken her first steps in reconciliation—by simply acknowledging me as an Indigenous person.

There were many other signs that the church was listening. At the banquet, Indigenous dancers performed and shared the beauty of Indigenous dance and the outfits. The leader of the dance group did a wonderful job explaining the history of the dances that were performed. As the dancers left the banquet, one of the international guests got up to dance at her table to the sound of the beating drums. This guest got caught up in the reconciliation moment.

There were also various events like the Blanket Exercise that was well attended by participants. Also, there was the warm and friendly response to the Rev. Margaret Mullin receiving her Woman of Faith Award. The indigenous guests who came with Rev. Margaret were greeted in a warm and friendly manner by the people attending the event.

After the event was over, Rev. Margaret and her group were invited to Paris, Ontario, to take part in their church service. It was a beautiful way to end the trip. Rev. Margaret led a smudging ceremony and a drum song as part of the service. Afterwards, there were small sharing circles done inside the church. I was pleasantly pleased with the church congregation's willingness to take part in the sharing circles.

During my time at the Rooted in Love event and in Paris, I felt the Presbyterian Church was listening. I saw it in their eyes. There was a willingness to bring about reconciliation with their Indigenous neighbours. I felt it in the hugs I received from the women and men I met. I heard it in the words we shared together. It was a truly listening heart that I saw during that week.

The Rev. Dr. Peter McLean

Going to Celebrate the Ngudradrekai Bible

On July 11, the Ngudradrekai Presbytery and guests will celebrate and give thanks to God for their new Bible. The PCC is sending the Rev. Peter Bush (Moderator of the 143rd General Assembly), his wife Debbie (daughter of the Rev. James and Mrs Joyce Sutherland, former missionaries in Taiwan), my wife Mary Beth, and me to join in the festivities and extend heartfelt greetings from congregations in the PCC who have supported the project.

10,000 Ngudradrekai people live in the southern mountains and foothills of Taiwan, and the majority of them are now Christians. The name is an adjective they use to describe themselves as those who <ngudra> "follow in the line or tradition" of people who have lived in the <drekai> "the colder interior part of the mountain forests". Their ancestors lived higher up the mountains than their nearest neighbours, the Paiwan people. Outsiders who are unaccustomed to the long words in their language have shortened the name to "Rukai", 魯凱 (Lu-kai) or "Drekay", but my colleagues tell me they prefer the full name of <Ngudradrekai>.

Ngudradrekai people have lived in Taiwan's southern mountains for centuries. Village life was based on a clearly defined class system of nobles and commoners, each with their mutual responsibilities.

Families built their houses using dark grey sheets of slate and adorned them with wood carvings. Two prominent totems were the 100-pace snake (if it bites you, you're dead before you can walk 100 paces) and the white lily (a symbol of purity and virtue). Everyone in the village did their part to grow and harvest millet, taro, sweet potatoes, fruit and vegetables. Men hunted for animals such as mountain deer or highly prized mountain boar, while women dyed threads and wove cloth from flax. Traditional clothing was usually black in colour, with carefully embroidered patterns in gold, green, and red. The new Bible uses these colours on the outside cover.

When Japan ruled Taiwan (1895-1945), they forced the Ngudradrekai people (and other indigenous peoples) to relocate their homes and villages to the lower mountains in order to "pacify" and assimilate them.

After terrible flooding and landslides caused by typhoon Morakot on August 8, 2009, several Ngudradrekai villages and churches had to relocate to the "White Lily" and "Rinari" subdivisions on the plains where elderly folk look up to the mountains with deep longing in their hearts.

In order to find work in Taiwan's modern economy, many young families have felt compelled to settle in larger cities, though on weekends they often return to their parents' homes near the mountains. Family dislocation has been a challenge and has led, among other things, to the loss of cherished cultural values and language. We pray the new Bible will be a means of preserving and promoting the Ngudradrekai language among family members of all ages.

In the 1950s the Gospel began to spread from Taiwanese Christians on the plains, to Paiwan villages in the foothills, to Ngudradrekai people who lived further up in mountain valleys.

Gradually churches were planted in remote villages. By God's grace, today in the PCT there is a close-knit Ngudradrekai Presbytery which consists of 17 strong and vibrant churches. In worship services young, middle, and older generations praise and pray to God in Ngudradrekai or Mandarin. Pastors preach in Ngudradrekai and offer their own running translation into Mandarin. Elders and church members are actively involved in community life in their villages or among families who have moved to one of the large cities.

As the Gospel spread, Ngudradrekai people heard it first in Japanese, then in Paiwan. In the 1950s-1970s, as portions of the Bible were translated into Paiwan, bilingual evangelists would preach and teach from them using Ngudradrekai. As Ngudradrekai churches grew and became stronger, they expressed the need for the Bible in their own language. In 1988 a team of seven Ngudradrekai pastors, with help from the Bible Society in Taiwan (BSTWN) and Young Nak Presbyterian Church in Seoul Korea, started to translate the New Testament. A constant challenge was to figure out how to spell words which had only been spoken before. The team used a Romanized "a-b-c" script to transcribe the sounds of Ngudradrekai words into what became the first book ever written in Ngudradrekai.

The BSTWN published the Ngudradrekai (or "Rukai") New Testament in 2001. Eager for the whole Bible, the translation team continued to work over the next 11 years to prepare a draft of the Old Testament. In 2012, the BSTWN appointed me to come alongside the team as the Translation Adviser for ongoing work on the Old Testament and for revisions to the New Testament. The Presbyterian Church in Canada has supported this project since 2012 through my active involvement.

The BSTWN is publishing 3000 copies of the Ngudradrekai Bible. (They were typeset and printed this spring by the Korean Bible Society.) This Bible is 2300 pages long since it is really two-Bibles-in-one: the new Ngudradrekai translation in Roman script, printed in parallel columns with a Mandarin translation called Today's Chinese Version (the 2017 revision).

We look forward to a joy-filled time of worship and celebration on July 11 when the new Bible is presented to Ngudradrekai churches. We pray that God ("Twaumase" in Ngudradrekai) will be glorified in the thanksgiving service and daily in people's lives as they read, study, and share the whole Bible with others. Through this new Bible, we pray that God will quench the thirst of Ngudradrekai people for God's life-giving water, satisfy their hunger for every word which comes from the mouth of the LORD ("TAMATAMA"), and strengthen families as they build their houses on the solid Rock.

As Psalm 18:2 proclaims:

> «Ku TAMATAMA amani ku palakebe nakwane ka alrisapesapeli si kepaleli»
> 「上主是保護我的巖石和堡壘」 (TCV2017)
> "The LORD is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer." (NRSV)

Appointment of the Rev. Dr. Blair Bertrand

International Ministries, of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, has appointed the Rev. Dr. Blair Bertrand to a three year term, effective September 1, 2017 to August 31, 2020.

An invitation has been received from the Church of Central Africa (CCAP), Blantyre Synod, to have the Rev. Bertrand work with the Blantyre Synod Youth Department. It is anticipated that he will also lecture at Zomba Theological College (ZTC) and work with TEEM (Theological Education by Extension in Malawi) teaching and in lay education training.

The Rev. Dr. Blair Bertrand, Vivian Bertrand, and their three children will be leaving for Malawi on August 27, 2017. Please keep the Bertrand family in your prayers during this time of transition.

In Memoriam

Mildred (Millie) Freeman

Mildred Josephine (McVittie) Freeman was born on March 30, 1932 and moved to Devon in 1960 with her husband Harvey (died in 2008). She died on June 3 and is survived by her children Philip, Mark, Mary, and Ruth and by her grandchildren Arlin and Madeline of Richmond BC, Susannah and Jade of Edmonton, and Tigana and Kasia of Lethbridge.

Katherine Allen reflects on Millie:

When I think of Millie Freeman, I picture a woman with a very deep Christian faith. I can't remember when I first met her, maybe not long after I started working with the WMS in the 1970s. The words that come to mind in describing Millie are: kindness, loving, dedicated, friendly, and a joy to talk to. Over the years if I needed to follow up with a group or one of the presbyterials in Alberta, I could just call her and she would find the answer for me. She was most helpful at the time of the WMS Annual Council Meeting, sitting at the registration desk along with one other person, mostly from one of the western synodicals.

When I heard of Millie's passing, my first thought was that the church, especially the WMS, has lost another stalwart dedicated member whose life was the church and her family. She will be remembered for her warm friendly nature and amazing energy as she volunteered for many things.

Alyth Campbell Mutart

Alyth Campbell Mutart, wife of the late Allan Ross Mutart of Woodville, ON, passed away on June 27, 2017. She was an active member of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Bolsover, where she served as an elder. She was also a faithful WMS member of Bolsover WOC. Alyth served as president of Lindsay Presbyterial, and also served as a member of the WMS Council Executive for a number of years.

Before her retirement, Alyth was a long-time teacher with the Hamilton Board of Education and a Contract Negotiator for the Women Teachers' Federation. She and Allan also co-partnered as president of the Lindsay Chapter Canadian Club.

Alyth will be remembered for her infectious smile, generous caring way, and her love of cats.

A graveside service was held on July 6 at the Old Stone Church Beaverton, with the Rev. Byron Grace officiating.

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In the Society

Synodical

On June 29, 2017 our first "get together" of the **British Columbia** WMS met at Calvin Presbyterian Church in Abbotsford. Sheila Jakus opened the event. Our speaker, Shannon Wyminga of the Cariboo ministry, spoke about living lives like Jesus and being a part of the lives of others. Her example was living in First Nations communities and being part of their lives.

Barb Marshall reported on the council meeting before the National Women's Gathering. She talked about the new international Together we Can! project in Haiti. Also, she told us about the women's conference to be held next year in Africa where women from as many as 20 African countries will be coming together to share, pray, learn, and support one another.

Then, Margaret Walker gave an introduction to the Presbyterian Women's Gathering. Susan Trapp spoke about two workshops: Filled with the Fullness of God and Leading Congregational Change in the 21st Century. Beth McIntosh talked about the Mission Fair and the Woman of Faith Award. Margaret ended the meeting with the presentation by Mona Scrivens.

After lunch, Betty McLagan, President of BC Synodical, led a closing ceremony for BC Synodical and gave the Benediction.

Presbyterial

Barrie Presbyterial held their Annual Meeting on May 10 at Stroud Presbyterian Church. The theme was "Be strong and take heart all you who hope in the Lord" (Psalm 31:24) and "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up." (1 Thessalonians 5:11) President Janice Terry constituted the meeting, Mary Veale-Parker brought greetings from the Stroud WMS and synodical, and the Rev. Doug Crocker welcomed us to Stroud Church.

The Vankoughnet WMS presented devotions by placing various flowers in a vase, telling us what each one represented and relating this to the WMS. The end result was a bouquet of beauty. Business followed with minutes

When sending in your articles to In the Society, please try to focus on the new and interesting parts of your event. Also, if you are sending pictures, send the highest resolution possible and be certain they are in focus. Articles generally appear in *Glad Tidings* 2–3 months after they are received.

Remembering

Alyth Mutart
St. Andrew's,
Bolsover ON

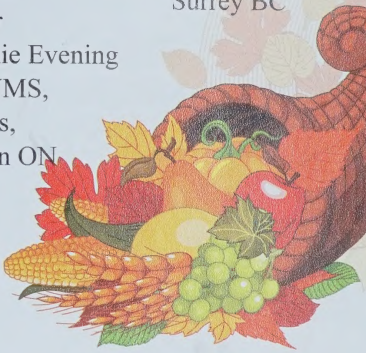
Mary Johnston,
St. Andrew's WMS
Kitchener, ON

Barbara Julia McDonald
WMS Helen Young
Auxiliary, Paris
Presbyterian, Paris ON

Suzanne Mater
Laural Lea/St.
Matthew's WMS,
Sarnia ON

Mary Sylver
Agnes Tolmie Evening
Auxiliary WMS,
St. Andrew's,
Southampton ON

Christina (Tina) Gray
Molly Doka WMS,
White Rock BC
Whalley Presbyterian,
Surrey BC



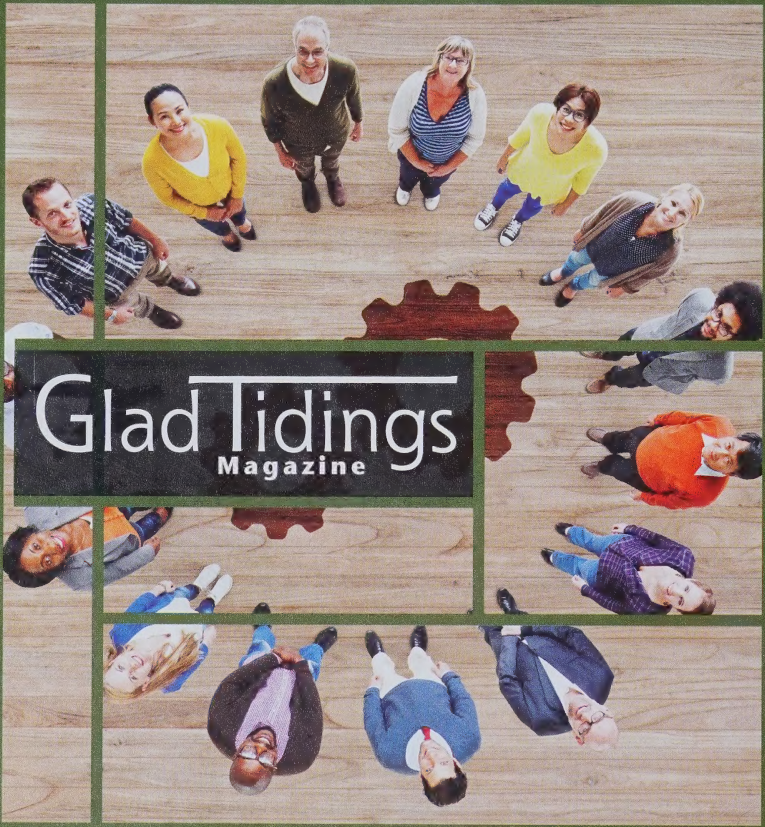
and secretary reports. The synodical delegates gave a report, including the reading of the poem, *Refugee*.

Jill Pardy conducted a memorial service for WMS members who passed in 2016. Tori Smit conducted the installation of the 2017–18 officers. Then, Janice Terry presented a Lifetime Achievement award to the Rev. Lynda Reid.

June Stevenson introduced her new book , *Mark My Words*, and read several poems from the book.

After a delicious lunch, we had time to check out the milk bag mats and pillows, prayer shawls, prayer squares, and the poster made for synodical.

Our afternoon speaker was Dr. Eva Olsson, a holocaust survivor. She gave us a firsthand account of her whole family being taken to the death camps during the war. By the time they were liberated, just hours away from being shot, she had lost her whole family except one sister. Dr. Olsson lived by the legacy her mother had left her. Never give up hope, tomorrow will be a better day. At the age of 83, Dr. Olsson began speaking to groups and especially at schools. In order for this to never happen again, she encourages the children to give unconditional acceptance to others who may not be the same as them. Dr. Olsson continues to pass on a legacy of caring, compassion, and character. Janice Terry closed the meeting in prayer.



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Editorial

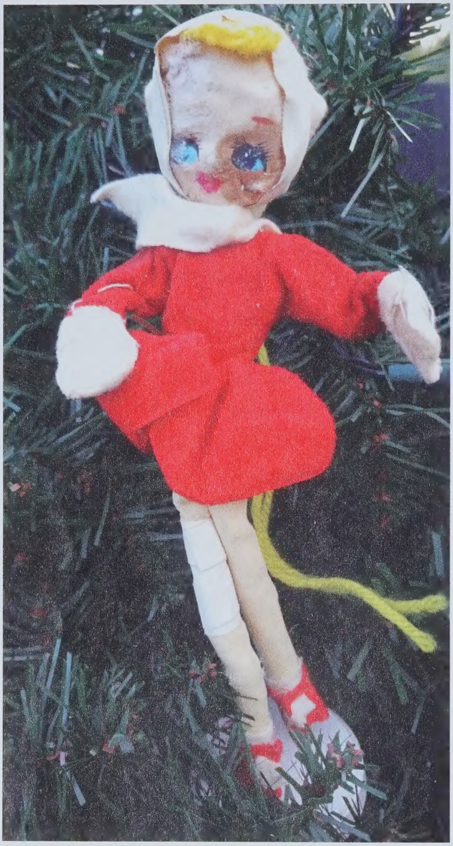
When I first started this Editorial, I thought I would write about slowing down and simplifying your Christmas. Yet, the more I looked at my calendar and schedule, the more I got excited about all the things I do at Christmas. I see the children's Christmas pageant listed, which I love. I see times already scheduled with friends and family, which I trust will be filled with laughter and joy, and maybe even a few tears. I see hockey games, where I get to cheer on my kids and enjoy the company of the other parents. I know that there will be extra services at the church which will bring new learning and times of praise.

This year, I am actually looking forward to the hustle and bustle of the season. Although I don't share my husband's love of a busy mall, I do still enjoy shopping online as I look for practical and what I hope will be well-loved gifts for family and a few special friends.

This is also a time when I prioritize time with my immediate family as we decorate the tree, read an Advent devotional, and bake Christmas goodies. Extended family and long lost friends also get some of my time as I read their Christmas cards and emails and plan visits with a few of them.

Obviously, with all this going on, I do need to still be mindful at Christmas. Often we think about the quiet times as being the times when Christ is with us. Yet, Christ is with us always. Christ is with us as we head out the door hoping we are not late for the Christmas pageant. Christ is with us as we interact with other hockey parents and cheer on our kids (or our grandchildren, nieces, or nephews). Christ is with us as we put the Christmas star on the Christmas tree or enjoy the lights outside our window. Christ is even with us in those moments when our 'bustle' might make us cut someone off in the mall parking lot or lament sending our Christmas cards out late, again.

Immanuel, God is with us—through the quiet times and the busy times. Whether we are at the mall, the hockey rink, the company Christmas party, or at church, God is with us. During the times when his light is shining brightly through us and the times when we need God's grace—Immanuel, God is with us. In all your hustle and bustle, and your moments of quiet this season, know that Christ is with you. Merry Christmas.



Sharing Faith Through a One-Eyed, Damaged Christmas Ornament

by Heather Malnick

Each year when my family puts up the Christmas tree, one particular ornament always takes the place of honour. It's an odd ornament: a one-eyed ice skater, clothed in red with a bandage wrapped around her leg, and who is missing a skate. Not very honourable, but the memories connected to this ornament are precious.

This one-eyed wounded skater has been in my family for longer than I have been alive. I don't remember how old I was when I was first told the story about this ornament—about how it was purchased by my parents in Germany when they celebrated their first Christmas together as a couple—but I do know that I was very, very young. And that story was shared with me and my brother every Christmas while we decorated the tree. We never tired of hearing it. In fact, we eagerly anticipated its telling each year. It represented a time before we existed. A time we could only imagine. This damaged, one-eyed skater gave us a glimpse into a time before us—a time that *led to us*.

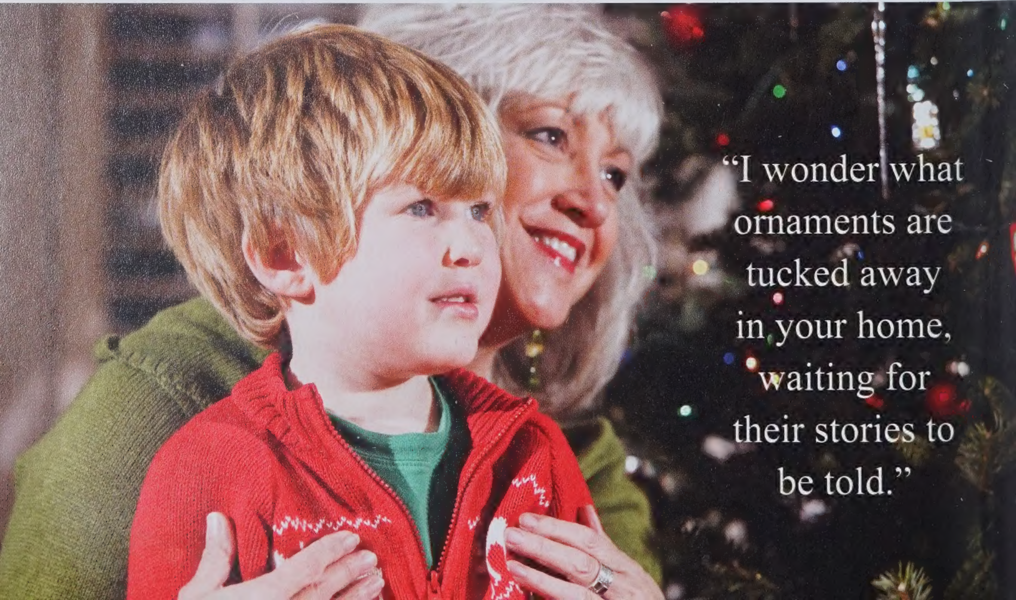
When my now-adult sons were young children, they too heard the story about this precious skater. About how she was purchased by their grandparents when they lived in Germany to help them celebrate their first Christmas together as a couple. And my boys heard that story year after year, anticipating its telling just like their uncle and mother once did. The skater, and the story surrounding her, drew them into a time before them, before their mother—a time that led to them. Despite the one eye, the bandages, and the missing skate, this ornament is precious because it represents decades of family story-telling—history that has been passed on from one generation to the next. We now have a four-year-old grandson, and the story of the wounded one-eyed skater is being repeated yet again, the fourth generation to hear the tale of his great-grandparent's first Christmas. A story that was before him—and led to him.

Sharing faith is much the same. It's not necessarily about teaching lessons, memorizing scripture passages, or learning catechism. It's about sharing family stories—from one generation to the next—stories that were before us, and that led to us. We share the stories of our family member, Abraham, who left everything that was familiar to travel to a far-off land because he loved God and believed God's promises of blessing. We share the stories of our family member, Moses, whose family loved him so much that they hid him in a basket to keep him safe and give him a future. We share stories of our family member, David, who cared for sheep in his youth and cared for a nation as a man. We share stories of our family member, Ruth, whose loyalty and devotion led her to a new land, a new family, and a new future. Stories of faith are simply stories of family. Stories that were before us, and led to us.

The Advent and Christmas seasons present magical opportunities for us to share our family stories—our faith stories. We have the privilege of sharing the story of the birth of our brother, Jesus, who loves us so much he chose to be born among us, and the Christmas tree can serve as our story-telling arena. Whether yours is a tree of the Charlie Brown variety or something from *Better Homes* and Gardens, chances are, there's a story behind each Christmas ornament. Perhaps it's a popsicle stick star, crafted by your son when he was in kindergarten. Your granddaughter marvels at holding something that her father created as a child, and then that star takes on new relevance as you tell the family story—the faith story—of the Magi who followed a star that led them to the Prince of Peace. It's an ornament, and a story, that came before her, but led to her. Or maybe it's a salt-dough snowman, fashioned by your daughter when she was a teenager. Your grandson is amazed to place his mother's creation on the bough of the Christmas tree, and then that dough snowman becomes more significant when you tell the family story—the faith story—of our God who created us and molds us in his image. It's an ornament, and a story, that came before him, but led to him.

That one-eyed, wounded skater with the missing skate, lies waiting in the boxes of Christmas ornaments tucked away in our basement. And in a while, those boxes will be hauled upstairs and the skater ornament will be revealed once again. And, once again, I will share her story—the family story—with my sons, and now my grandson, as we set that wounded skater in her place of honour on our Christmas tree. This year, I pray that the story will take on new significance for my grandson as I share with him how God loves us, even when we are broken and wounded like the one-eyed skater. I wonder what ornaments are tucked away in your home, waiting for their stories to be told. And I also wonder how we can use these ornaments to share our family stories—our faith stories. Stories that came before us, but led to us.

Rev. Heather Malnick is minister of Living Faith Community Presbyterian Church in Baxter ON. Heather and her husband, John, have been blessed with three sons: Cameron, Jordan, and Ben, along with their grandson, Jackson. Life is busy but fun as they enjoy camping, biking, reading, travelling, and backyard barbecues.



"I wonder what ornaments are tucked away in your home, waiting for their stories to be told."

Christmas Is

by Victoria Stirling

Christmas is all about love, and a great joy;
because of the birth of a special boy.
That baby so gentle, so sweet, and so small
came as a gift, and he came for us all.

His message tells us, as it does each year;
Christmas is more than presents, or good cheer;
it's loving each other as he first loved us,
and caring for neighbours without due fuss.

God made us a promise; to you and me,
with a covenant that can set us free.
God reminds us he loves us-our faults and all,
and his sign every Christmas; a babe in a stall.

Faith Formation Outside of Church

by Jennifer Geddes

When I was growing up, it was not uncommon for me and my brother to spend a week or two with each set of grandparents throughout the summer months, and most of the time those weeks were spent at their cottages. Both sets had built their own cottages and both cottages could be found on the shores of Lake Huron. The cottage that belonged to Grandma and Grandpa, was just outside of Goderich and the other, which belonged to Nana and Poppa, was outside of Kincardine.

Their personalities were very different but both pairs loved us

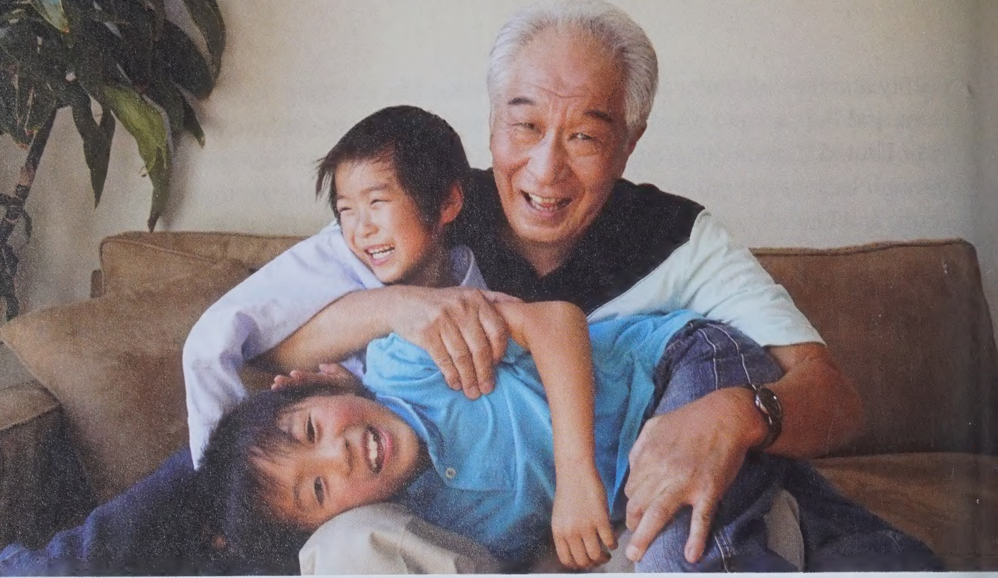
deeply and they all had a strong faith. Nana and Poppa were involved in their United Church congregation through various committees and the choir, and Grandma and Grandpa were active at a Presbyterian Church as choir members and elders. However, the truth is, that when we were at the cottage faith formation did not happen at the churches, but through daily activities.

For example, at the cottage in Goderich we had a pump organ in the living room! On days when we had to stay inside, one of us would pump the pedals while the other would hammer out a song from one of the songbooks under the seat. Most often that song was from a hymnbook. We would try to get our grandparents to guess what hymn we were playing and sing along. Somewhere deep within me, even at an early age, the words of those hymns rooted themselves. Songs like Blessed Assurance and At the Dawning of Salvation still come to me often with the sound of that windy, reedy pump organ mixed with the booming alto voice of my Grandma.

One summer, Grandpa was involved in a stewardship campaign at his church. It was a little frustrating because while I wanted to go to the beach or for a drive to the local bakery, my Grandpa was busy reading reports or driving back and forth for meetings. I must have been about 6 or 7 years old and I asked Grandpa what "stewardship" meant. You can understand my confusion because my Grandpa's first name was Stewart and I had trouble understanding why he had to deal with this ship instead of playing with me.

Grandpa explained that stewardship was how we took care of what God had given us by saving and being generous—donating and spending money was a part of stewardship too. He was preparing to help his church raise money beginning in the Fall. (It was thanks to Grandpa's "stewardship" to his grandchildren that I could pay for my post-secondary education.) I have always thought about how self-less he was in not only donating funds but also his time to the church. Grandma and Grandpa's balance of joy and commitment to their faith helped me to also find a healthy balance. Sometimes it is important to just belt out your favourite hymn, no matter the occasion, and sometimes it is important to steady the course and get to work on what matters.

Every night before I went to bed at the cottage in Kincardine, Nana would say the Lord's Prayer and ask me what I was thankful for or if there was someone I was worried about. Sometimes I was struck with homesickness and it was Nana who told me to pray about it. I remember saying, "That's not going to help!" but Nana replied, "Oh yes it will. Because when you give something



"we never know how what we say will influence a young mind."

to God it means there's less for you to worry about on your own." When I am praying with our local prayer group, I am reminded that our prayers are not just words but a way to place our worries in God's hands. Also, believe it or not, often when I lead the Lord's prayer in a service, I can still smell the wood panelling of that upper bedroom at the cottage. Both Nana and Poppa were gentle, yet persistent, every night in reminding us to always give thanks. Even as an adult at the end of the day I like to remind myself that each day presents moments of thankfulness.

As I grew up and moved out on my own, Nana would often call to ask how things were going at the church. Admittedly, sometimes those conversations were long and not at the most opportune time. When I talked to my mother about it she said, "I think, had it been a different time, when she was younger, Nana would have attended seminary. That's why she's always asking." From then on, my conversations took on a different meaning. Nana was involved in leadership in the church, but at the time when she was young and attending school it was only acceptable for a woman to continue education in either nursing or teaching. I have been the benefactor of changes within both social and church norms and am privileged with the task of ministering to a congregation.

Yet, Nana ministered to me, teaching me that prayer can take on many forms and now, since her passing in 2010, I miss those long chats about things at the church. Nana was a good listener and would always help me see things from different perspectives.

On the surface, these examples may seem trivial and you may wonder how on earth I could call these moments faith forming. But it is those simple moments that have helped me to have a faith that is deep and committed, prayerful and thankful. By watching and participating in the daily routines of my grandparents and experiencing that encouragement and those conversations, my identity as a Christian grew. My grandparents didn't teach me how to preach or much about theology, but through song and prayer, through devotion and curiosity, a relationship with Christ developed.

When I talked to Grandpa years latter about how he had taught me about stewardship he had no recollection of our conversation. Nana never knew how her words informed how I prayed. The lesson is that we never know how what we say will influence a young mind. And, while it may look like nothing is getting through, often a child is paying attention to those words and lessons. grandparents hold power because visits with Grandchildren are often special and full of adventure and that adventure can be faith forming!

Jennifer Geddes is the minister at Comox Valley Presbyterian Church, in Comox BC. She, and her husband Mike, enjoy exploring Vancouver Island. Jenn is also an avid tea drinker and collector, and enjoys live music events and local art. She believes in ministry beyond the church walls, recognizing the need to be involved in the community to share the love of Christ with everyone.

SHARING IMMANUEL WITH OUR GRANDCHILDREN

by Jackie Hoekstra

Immanuel—God With Us. Is that true for you as a grandparent? Do you believe that God is with you through the trials and joys, and the tears and celebrations of life? Do you trust your God in all things financial and emotional and with your relationships and your future? Immanuel—God With Us. We are not alone.

Immanuel—God With Us. This is a good place to start when sharing our faith with our grandchildren. John 15:4–6 encourages us, "Live in me. Make your home in me just as I do in you. In the same way that a branch can't bear grapes by itself but only by being joined to the vine you can't bear fruit unless you are joined with me. When you're joined with me and I with you, the relation intimate and organic, the harvest is sure to be abundant. Separated, you can't produce a thing." (MSG) We as, grandparents, must be deeply rooted in the love of God to be able to pass that love to our grandchildren.

How can we walk the talk if we are not walking with Jesus every day? Our own spiritual practices of prayer, meditation, worship, and service are paramount to being able to pass on the faith. It is difficult to pass on to your grandchildren what you yourself don't have.

It is also hard to know how to intentionally share one's faith with grandchildren. The topic of faith is often divisive and confrontational. Researcher Margaret Crompton states, "To talk about religion and spirituality, is for many people as embarrassing as talking about sex, death, and money." Spiritual experiences are for many unique and deeply personal. Are you one of those people who find it difficult to find the right words to describe the mystery that is your faith and therefore prefer not to speak overtly about your faith? Are you more in line with the statement, "Preach the gospel and if necessary use words." Do you have grandchildren that are being raised in non-Christian homes and you do not want to offend their parents with your outdated views of the world? Whatever your personal situation, there are things all of us can do to pass on the faith to our grandchildren this Advent season.

First, remember that children are always watching; watching and learning. What do they see? I remember as a little girl about the age of five or six peering into my parent's bedroom. I have a much defined picture of my father kneeling beside his bed, his hands clasped, and his head bowed in prayer. When I was a teenager, I watched and learned when my father pulled over the car to the side of the road awestruck by the dazzling colours of a sunset and said to me, "How can you look at that and not believe in God?" I still feel the hands of my grandmother (Oma) rubbing my back, listening to me read, giving me candies, teaching me songs, teaching me to knit; I felt safe sitting beside her. I was important to her, loved by her, and in turn found it safe to believe in a loving God.

Children are always watching; watching and learning. What do they see? Are they seeing the fruits of the spirit lived out in Grandparents? Are you being kind, patient, loving, and faithful to your grandchildren, children, or neighbours? As Oliver Goldsmith says, "You can preach a better sermon with your life than with your lips." Yet, that doesn't mean words are not important. Do you ask your grandchildren for forgiveness when you have said something rude or unkind? Be quick to ask for forgiveness. Have you ever said to your grandchild "I am sorry if I hurt your feelings, please forgive me." Have you ever made a snarky comment about someone, have you been impatient as you drive, or jealous of someone else's vacation? Through your example, grandchildren can learn the art of confession.

Also, live your life knowing that all of life is worship. It is not relegated to the sanctuary only. Whether you are reading a Bible story, or another book, together, praying before a meals, singing, talking, playing games, going to church, attending a school play, painting, making playdough, taking walks in nature and marveling at God's creation, going to the zoo, or watching a movie, turn it into an act of worship. Romans 12:1–2 says, "So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking around life—and place it before God as an offering." (MSG) This piece of scripture is so freeing when we see all of life as worship, as a style of life in which our bodies become living sacrifices offered up before God. Each morning we begin again, praying to God to use us to bring about the kingdom as God sees fit.

Another way to pass on the faith is by the servant work of helping parents. Offer to look after the grand children so the parents can have some much needed alone time or be refreshed from the constant demands of parenting. When you are responsible for the children, there will be more opportunity for spiritual conversations. Risk having some awkward conversations about faith rather than steering clear of spiritual matters.

Also, a great gift you can give your grand children is the gift of acceptance. Accept your grand children for who they are and for the gifts that God has bestowed upon them. In this age of competition and pop culture, grand children may not feel good enough, pretty enough, smart enough, athletic enough…you fill in the blanks of enough. Someone once told me that it was wonderful to be a grandparent because as a parent you are always worried about what your child will become, but as a grandparent, you can just enjoy the grandchildren for who they are. Grandparents can provide that all accepting, all loving atmosphere reflective of the grace of God.

Reminding our grandchildren that they are enough is important. Reminding ourselves that we are enough is important too. It is God's goodness not our goodness that we need to be reminded of, each and every day. We so easily forget.

Finally, a practice you may want to try as grandparents is the "Examine" from Ignatius Loyola. This practice of reviewing your day together and reflecting on where you saw God helps to keep moving us forward in our spiritual journeys. First, light a candle and say, something like, "Christ you are the light of the world." Begin with a short song. Then, ask each person gathered a series of questions. What surprised you the most today? Where did you see God today? Where did you see God the least today? Each person takes time to answer the questions asked. You may want to end with a short prayer. Practices such as these help us reflect on our day, where God was active, where we noticed God's presence. Some of you probably already do best part/worst part of the day. The Examine could help the grandchildren and you to focus on God each day.

There are no simple steps or short cuts to sharing one's faith with our grandchildren. When we remember to be plugged into the vine, we can begin to produce authentic, loving relationships that undergo ongoing transformation. Whenever we remember the root command of Jesus to love one another, we become better role models for our grandchildren. Every time we engage in an act of faith in Christ, we are pointing our grandchildren in the right direction. Every time we love someone else, we show our grandchildren the life of Christ. Every time we rest in God's grace and trust that the Holy Spirit will work in our grandchildren's hearts, we are allowing God to work through us.

I have heard it said, "A role model is a better teacher than an instruction manual." We must be bold in admitting that we are people who fall short of God's will. Sometimes it is hard to be a grandparent of faith. Yet, what a joy to know that we are not alone in this messy and often difficult life. Immanuel—God With Us. May our lives model humble, joyful thanksgiving, and a trust in our Immanuel that will be infectious to our grandchildren and to all future generations.

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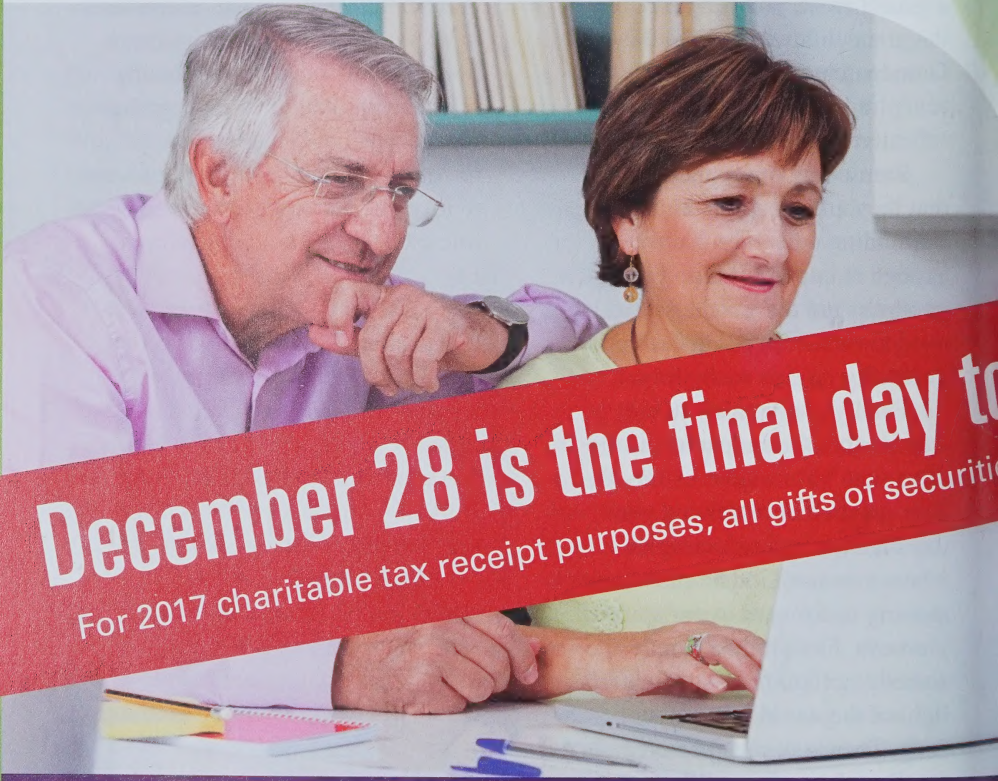
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Longest Night

by Emma Duncan

Christmas is supposed to be the 'most wonderful time of the year' but for many people, this is not the case. Instead, Christmas is a time of longing and sorrow. Longing for loved ones who are no longer with us. Longing for relationships to be healed. Longing for the angst of life to disappear.

In Matthew 2:1-6, we read:

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

"'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.'"

As we read this familiar story of the wise men, we realize that they also experienced longing in their lives. Their search also led them into unchartered territory. They did not know what the future held, but they did know that they must follow the star.

Their longing to follow this mysterious star in the east was so strong that it drove them to leave their

homeland. It drove them to leave their families and all that gave them comfort and a sense of stability. It drove them into the path of King Herod who wanted them silenced.

They took these risks not for a king in a royal palace, but for a helpless baby who was born to parents of no consequence. And how did they know that they would find what they were looking for? Would this baby really be the King of the Jews? Would he truly be the shepherd of God's people? The wise men looked up into the heavens and God revealed to them these truths through the mysteries of the night sky. And so they went in search of a king.

We are also in search of this king. When we grieve, we are desperately searching for something—or someone—to hold onto in the darkness. Someone who is real and true and will carry us when we have no strength left. Someone who will guide us when we forget how to put one foot in front of the other. We long for God's healing presence in our midst because we realize that none of the world's 'fixes' will do the trick. The world has nothing to offer that can truly heal the pain that we feel.

And so we journey with the wise men in search of the star because we long for the same thing that they were searching for over 2000 years ago. We long for the Messiah. The Prince of Peace. The One whose love has the power to give us comfort and to heal our broken hearts.

May we experience the hope of the wise men that points to Jesus Christ, who is our saviour, redeemer, and friend. May we experience the perseverance of the wise men to continue on our journey of grief and healing even when we enter unchartered territory. May we find the courage of the wise men to travel with them and seek out the babe in the manger. Amen.

Christmas Worship: Getting Inside the Story

by Dorothy and Peter Ruddell

Call to Worship:

One: Praise rises within us on knowing
that the Word was with God from
the very beginning when all was created.

All: We rejoice that God created all things
in the Word who gave his life and light
to everyone—the light that shines in the dark.

One: We praise God that John came to announce
the coming of the light and to lead people to faith.
The true light was coming into the world.

All: We worship with joy that the Word became
a human being and lived among us—the glory
of the only Son of the Father was here for us to see.
From that Son all of God's kindness and truth
has come among us. God be praised!

(Based on John 1:1–14 Contemporary English Version CEV)

Opening Prayer:

(Psalm 96: selected verses read responsively)

Sing a new song to the LORD! Everyone on this earth,
sing praises to the LORD, sing and praise his name.

Day after day announce, "The LORD has saved us!"
Tell every nation on earth, "The LORD is wonderful
and does marvelous things! The LORD is great
and deserves our greatest praise!
He is the only God worthy of our worship.
Give honor and praise to the LORD,
whose power and beauty fill his holy temple."
He is wonderful! Praise him and bring
an offering into his temple.
Everyone on earth, now tremble and worship
the LORD, majestic and holy."
Announce to the nations, "The LORD is King!
The world stands firm, never to be shaken,
and he will judge its people with fairness."
Tell the heavens and the earth to be glad and celebrate!
Command the ocean to roar with all of its creatures
and the fields to rejoice with all of their crops.
Then every tree in the forest will sing joyful songs
to the LORD. He is coming to judge
all people on earth with fairness and truth.

(Contemporary English Version CEV)

Hynm: #153 Joy to the world

Scripture:

Note: You will be reading the Christmas story first from the Gospel of Matthew, and then from Luke's Gospel. Luke is the most familiar as it is the one most commonly used. You might like to read them in different translations—BibleGateway.com is an useful source for finding different translations. It is good to listen with the understanding that in each case, the writer wants to convince his readers of who Jesus is.

Introduction to the Matthew Reading:

In this reading, Matthew tells us who Jesus is. He does this by recounting God's preparation for Jesus' birth. In his Christmas story, Joseph is the main character. God communicates with Joseph in dreams to tell him what he must do about his relationship with Mary, and to tell him what name he is to give to the baby. Joseph was not to be passive in this whole matter but active. Joseph's involvement also brings to Jesus the prophetic connection with David.

Read: Matthew 1:18–25

Introduction to the Luke Reading:

Luke's telling of the birth of Jesus is familiar, but also new to us each time we read or hear it. Verses 1–14 give emphasis to first, the birth of Jesus and second, to the glory of God and peace on earth. With this message ringing in their ears, the shepherds took off for Bethlehem to see if what they had been told was in fact true.

Luke sets out the historical event as it happened. The facts tell how Jesus came to be born in Bethlehem. Bethlehem was overcrowded with all the people there for the census—there was no room in the inn. A stable must suffice as the place for Mary to give birth to Jesus with no angel presence. It is not until the shepherds arrive with their story of what had happened to them out in the field that Mary,

and likely Joseph also, had something to ponder about this special baby. The shepherds return home celebrating and rejoicing all the way.

Read: Luke 2:1–20

Hynm: #144 ‘Twas in the moon of wintertime

Meditation: Getting Inside the Story

The stories upon which this meditation is based are quite different. Mary is the key player in Luke’s story. In Matthew, Joseph is. Mary and Joseph, each in their own way, struggle with the mystery and the majesty of the Christmas story. In our Call to Worship, we also heard John’s quite different telling of the Christmas story.

Emmanuel, God with us! What does that mean? For Mary and Joseph, it brought both fear and wonder. It also brought action. Joseph followed God’s direction that came in dreams and took Mary as his betrothed. Mary also played out her role in God’s salvation of the world. She consented to God’s action in her life. She carried and gave birth to the baby in Bethlehem, and pondered in her heart all the angel had told the shepherds about him. Joseph did as he had been told and gave the baby the name Jesus. John speaks of the Word coming into the world and revealing God’s true nature and glory. There is much to consider in these stories which are all about faith.

The faith of Mary and Joseph and their openness to God’s leading speak of their faith. Mary does not understand fully what God is doing through her but willingly, she opens herself to be God’s servant. Joseph struggles to follow God’s expectations even in the face of what people would think—but follow he did.

God’s messengers came to the shepherds with good news from God. The shepherds saw no choice but to check out what they had been told. They discovered all was just as they had been told. The news of Jesus’ birth brought them faith and great joy.

John's Christmas story adds to the mystery but also gives us another perspective as we try to get inside the story of this defining event of who Jesus was and is. The Word who was with God at the very beginning and involved in Creation came into the world in human flesh. He shone God's glorious light into the darkness of the world and the darkness could not destroy it. The very glory of God shone in the world—some people did not see it or could not accept it, but others did see what was happening through the Word and put their faith in him. John concludes his story with these words, "The Word became a human being and lived here with us. We saw his true glory, the glory of the only Son of the Father. From him all the kindness and all the truth of God have come down to us." (CEV)

Each year, when we get inside the Christmas story, God works a miracle of grace and love in our own lives. However, there are questions to ask: What do we hear in the Christmas story when we enter into its mystery and majesty? What do we hear about God in this story? What does this story say to us about our engagement with God? How do we best express our own joy over Jesus' birth?

The Christmas story in each of its different tellings is about faith—the faith of the people involved and our faith. We have advantage in that we celebrate Jesus' birth in the light of his death and resurrection. We rejoice in our own salvation and the new life which Jesus gives to us through his rising to new life. We possess both a Christmas faith and an Easter faith.

We find ourselves inside the story of the Christmas miracle—God among us as a human being. With the help of Matthew, Luke, and John we can discover for yet another time Jesus and his role in our lives. Our faith and our imagination opens us to hear about Joseph's dreams, angels proclaiming God's wondrous love, to frolic with shepherds as they express joy over God's good news about the birth of a saviour in Bethlehem. We ponder John's mystic telling of Jesus' entry into the world. We experience God's grace and love and are surprised by God's joy.

We discover ourselves to be enfolded into God's gracious, loving arms. We know the peace announced by the angels at Christ's birth. We are moved to break once again into the words of Psalm 96 which we used as our opening prayer. This psalm gives us words to proclaim and celebrate the eternal reign of the redeeming God revealed to the world in Jesus. These words lead us to shout out that God is the Lord of all the earth. All nature joins with us in our praise and adoration.

We get inside the story and find ourselves restored and renewed by God's presence in the baby Jesus. We come out of the story of Jesus' birth knowing with renewed clarity of and commitment to what is our mission—being tellers of the good news of God's redeeming work in Jesus. With God's light shining in us, we push back the darkness so that others can see the light and find the joy of God's love for themselves.

Hynm: #133 Go tell it on the mountain

Offering

Offering Prayer:

Gracious God, you have opened your hands and filled our lives with many gifts—family, friends, food, education, work, worship, and the ability to help others. But more than these you have offered in Jesus, born in Bethlehem, your love and grace in which we find forgiveness and new life. We offer our gifts to you and commit ourselves to sharing the good news announced by the angels to the shepherds. We pray that your Spirit will keep us strong in our service to others in Jesus' loving and life-giving way. Amen.

Prayers of the People:

Holy and righteous God, who wills that all people should come to know your redeeming love in your Son, Jesus Christ, and who has sent your Spirit to us

that we may know your truth and have the strength to act upon it, we lift our voices to praise you for your enduring grace.

We pray for your creation and ask that you give us the wisdom to sustain it for the benefit of this generation and future generations. May we have the conviction and the strength to work for the restoration and renewal of your creation. Help us to share the rich gifts you have offered so that all people will benefit.

We pray for the poor and deprived and threatened of this world. May governments establish policies and actions that give food, clothing, housing, and education to all so that all people may live in peace. May all know fairness and justice.

We pray for families who are torn apart because of abuse, alcoholism, drug addiction, and a breakdown in relationships. May they find individuals, agencies, and churches who will hold them up and lead them to healing, reconciliation, and wholeness.

We pray for people of other faiths. May we be open to sharing with them so that we may get to know each other and work and live together in peace and harmony.

We pray for refugees—for those who have been sponsored to find a better life in Canada and also those who still wait in camps around the world. May a spirit of generosity continue among the people of Canada. May conflict end and peace and justice come so that people no longer need to flee their countries.

We pray for all Christian churches and especially our own Presbyterian Church in Canada. May leaders and people alike know the leading and strength of your Spirit as they seek to be diligent in their proclamation of your good news in Jesus Christ.

We pray for the mission work of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, the Women's Missionary Society, and the Atlantic Mission Society as they work with our international partner's in mission to bring your good news to people all over the world. May our missionaries, ministers, congregations, and local mission groups know your strengthening and guiding hand in all their work around the world and here in Canada.

Holy and righteous God, be pleased to hear our prayers. Fill our celebrations of your son's birth with family, friends and perhaps, even strangers with love and joy. Through Christ our Lord to whom with you and your Spirit be praise unending. Amen.

Hynm: #135 Christians awake

Commission and Blessing:

The Word came into the world in human flesh shining the light of God's redeeming grace into our human darkness and the darkness could not destroy it.

God spoke to Joseph in dreams of the nature of the of the child Mary was carrying in her womb and told him what name the child should have.

Mary and Joseph came to Bethlehem so that when Jesus was born the prophecies about his birth would be fulfilled. Shepherds heard the announcement of Jesus' birth and rushed to Bethlehem and told all what they had heard.

Once again through faith and imagination, we have entered into the story of the birth of Jesus and bathed ourselves in the good news of God's love breaking into the world. We go now to live with joy and hope, witnessing to the new life we have found in Jesus born in Bethlehem. Amen.

Situating the La

by Dorcas and Noel Gordon

Opening Prayer:

God of peace and opportunity, our Creator and Redeemer, we come to you to pray for your mercy, forgiveness, and a new start. Instead of overcoming evil with good, we have stood by while goodness has been affronted. We ask for your help to give peace a new chance to thrive in our world.

Excerpt from the Prayer of the 9th International Conference of the Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Centre.[1]

Scripture:

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while the spirit of God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light and there was light. And God saw that the light was good…. God saw everything that God had made, and indeed, it was very good.

Genesis 1:1–4a, 31

The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world and those who live in it; for God has founded it on the seas and established it on the rivers.

Psalm 24:1

For the 'earth and its fullness are the Lord's. If an unbeliever invites you to a meal and you are disposed to go, eat whatever is set before you without raising any question on the ground of conscience.

1 Corinthians 10:26–27

This is the first of four studies on the Land of Palestine.

nd of PALESTINE

In the Corinthians passage, Paul quotes Psalm 24 as part of his response to the factionalism in the Corinthian community. In chapters 8:1–11:1 the Corinthians are arguing over whether it is right to eat meat that has been sacrificed to another god. The controversy has two parts: Can they go to an idol temple and eat the meat? Can they eat such meat sold at the market or at a private dinner?

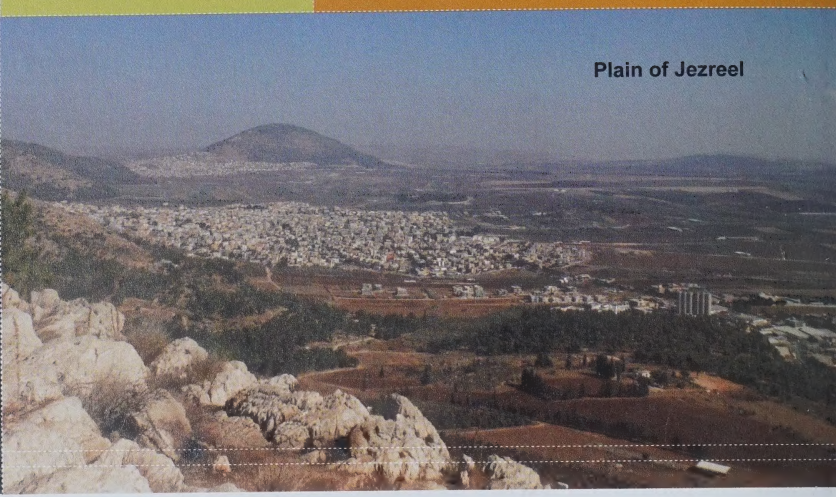
First, we should note that business transactions, weddings, funerals, etc. often took place in the context of a temple where meat (a luxury) sacrificed to that idol, was served. Just as this meat was part of the sacrifice system, so was all meat sold in the market place. In other words, only a little of the animal was sacrificed and the rest was sold or used for special feasts and business dinners.

This controversy concerns how they are to understand what God requires of them in terms of their relationship to the "world". For Paul to say "no" to eating meat sacrificed to idols would mean that no member of the community could exercise their kinship duties or business responsibilities in a society where networking and family relationships were primary obligations. It would totally isolate the Corinthian Jesus followers from everyone in society, eventually making them a closed sect. Paul uses many arguments to advise caution about –and in chapter 9, warnings against—eating meat at an idol temple, but then, in terms of the second part of the controversy, he quotes Psalm 24 to give permission to eat idol meat sold in the market place or at a private dinner. Everything—the earth and all its fullness—belongs to God.

How do these texts help us to situate ownership of land and ourselves in a world created by God? We live in this world that God owns and declared to be "very good."

Narrative:

The land of Palestine has a long and complex history. Since before the Christian era, Palestinians, both Jew and Arab shared the land. Together with Christians after the coming of Christ, these three peoples faced conquering empires and



Plain of Jezreel

battles so numerous that a large plain, the Plain of Jezreel, east of Nazareth is pictured as the site of the battle of Armageddon.[2] As complex as the ancient history of Palestine is, its modern history is no less so.

Our experience of this land began with Noel's arrival in Haifa in June 1967. Having just graduated from university he set out to explore the world. These travels eventually took him to Palestine, now Palestine/Israel. Here is his personal account of living in the land of Palestine/Israel for over a year:

> My own first-hand experience of Palestine/Israel began early on the morning of June 15, 1967, when I landed at the docks of Haifa aboard the first ship from Greece to Israel following the ceasefire in the June 1967 war. I was on my way overland to India or so I thought, however, with the war all Israeli land borders were closed.
>
> The Haifa harbour still contained the remains of the *Exodus*, the boat that had brought thousands of European Jewish refugees to Israel after World War II. On the docks, the Jewish Agency provided myself and hundreds of other young people, mainly Jews from North America and Europe, a warm welcome and an offer to live and work on a kibbutz. Since I planned to travel east as soon as possible, I volunteered to go to a kibbutz in the upper Galilee not far from the Syrian border.
>
> The kibbutz, *Kfar Hanassi* (the Village of the President), assigned me a bed in a dormitory, a meal card for the communal kitchen, and instructions to report for work in the plum orchard at 5:30 a.m. the next morning. This began over five months of hard outdoor work, intensive Hebrew language instruction, and lots of stories about the early days of the kibbutz.

hoto: Chained shops nd homes of the evicted alestinians.

In November 1967, I received an invitation from the Headmaster of the Society of Friends (Quakers) Boys School to teach in Ramallah in the West Bank. I accepted and when my kibbutz friends heard they were sure I would either be murdered by Palestinians, all of whom they considered terrorists or succumb to disease from, what they were certain were, the unsanitary and primitive Palestinian living conditions.

The reality was entirely different. The staff and students welcomed me warmly and the school, I soon discovered, was among the best in the Middle East with many of its graduates winning scholarships to the American University in Beirut or entrance to Canadian and US universities.

Life in Ramallah and throughout the entire West Bank during 1967 and into 1968 was extremely difficult for the Palestinians. In the face of the occupation, Palestinians, in shock, became mute. Harsh military law was imposed by the Israeli occupation forces, which meant dusk to dawn curfews for everyone, control of civilian movement by military checkpoints, and Palestinian house demolitions. School classes often had to be cancelled at a moment's notice if the Israeli military governor so demanded.

Dorcas' history of this land is more recent. She first visited there as part of a sabbatical in 2008, but an incident in 2009 when she visited Noel who was serving as a World Council of Churches' accompanier (EAPPI)[3] in Hebron has remained with her over the subsequent years:

A feature of Noel's work in Hebron was to observe every Saturday the treatment of Palestinians when a group of mostly Zionist Jews embarked on an escorted tour of the Palestinian market area (in Arabic, Suk) looking for

“We must begin within an understanding of what history is and what it is not.”

> signs and symbols of ancient Jewish settlement of this area. When found, no matter how sparse, these symbols became part of their argument that Hebron belonged to them and the Palestinians should be evicted. Their escort: a dozen heavily armed Israeli soldiers. As we followed this group words and actions of derision floated back to us but it was what happened next that is seared in my memory.
>
> An elderly Palestinian woman emerged suddenly from one of the side lanes. Immediately, with weapons drawn some of the soldiers formed a phalanx around the Jewish group, while others pushed the woman harshly against a wall. Some of those guns were aimed at those of us following behind, observers of this scene. After a few tense moments, one young Palestinian man bravely ventured forward, put his arms around the confused and frightened woman and led her back down the lane from which she had emerged. The soldiers stood down and the journey through the market continued. At the end, one of the soldiers, by my guess less that 20 years old, whose machine gun had been pointed directly at us, raised his gun to me in salute and said in English, “have a nice day.”

The Palestine Territories–the West Bank and East Jerusalem–under Israeli occupation and Gaza, under Israeli blockade, have become places of oppression and injustice. The timeline below sets out in broad strokes some of the history of this “holy” land.

An Abbreviated Timeline:

1299–1922

The Ottoman (Turkish) Empire began it conquest of the world in 1299. It gradually made it way through Serbia, Bulgaria, Constantinople, conquering Jerusalem in 1517. This empire was defeated during World War 1 (WW1).

1919–1948

In 1919 at the Treaty of Versailles, Britain was given a temporary mandate for the administration of Palestine with the understanding that it would work in the best interests of its Jewish and Arab inhabitants. A 1921 census of Palestine indicates

Iqrith village destroyed by Israeli army, Christmas Eve 1951.

590,000 Muslims, 89,000 Christians and 84,000 Jews. This mandate ended in 1948 with the partition of Palestine into two states.

1947–1949

The UN Partition Plan (1947) divided the land 53% to be under Jewish control and 47% under Palestinian control (Map 2) even though in 1946, ownership of the land was roughly 7% Jewish and 93% Palestinian (Map 1). The Palestinians saw this as betrayal and refused to accept the Plan. Conflict erupted, at the end of which the State of Israel (having come into being in 1948) held approximately 78% of the land.

The Palestinians refer to the period 1947–1949 as the **Nakba**. During this time, over 400 Palestinian villages were destroyed by the Israeli military and gangs of Israeli extremists. Between 750,000 and 1 million Palestinians fled taking refuge in Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan and various parts of the West Bank of Jordan not under Israeli control (Map 3).

Separation wall

1948–Present

From 1948–the present: The State of Israel has continued to confiscate Palestinian land, demolish homes, setting up illegal settlements on that land. To date Israel has approximately 261 Jewish-only settlements and "outposts" built on confiscated Palestinian land.

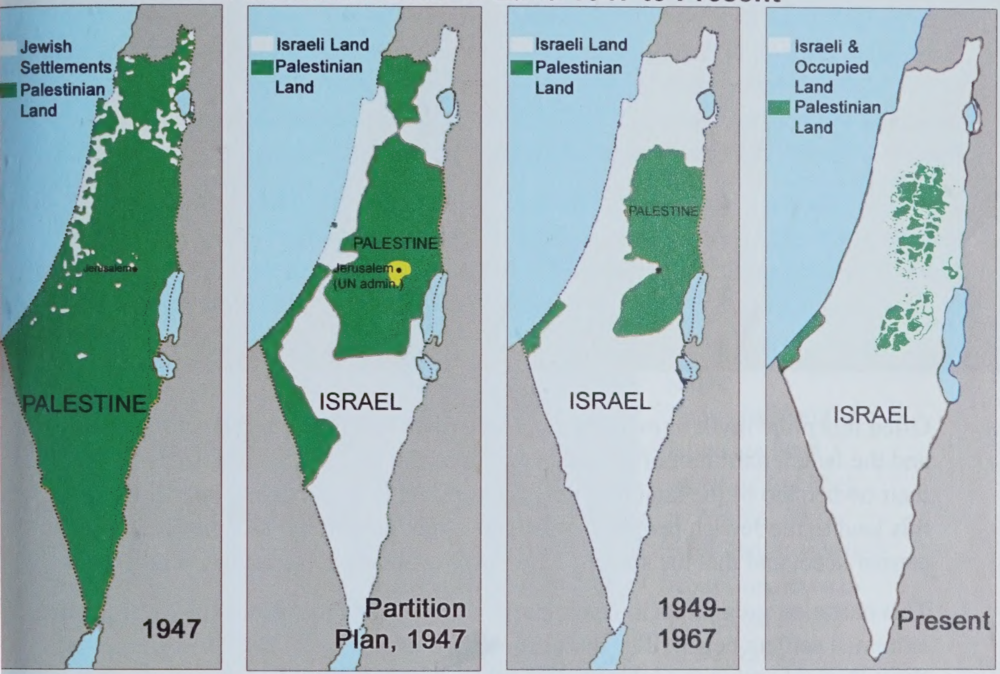
The June 1967 War: While there continues to be two stories as to who struck first—Egypt or Israel, clearly the state of Israel had been preparing for such a war for years.[4] On June 12, 1967, Israel occupied Gaza, the West Bank, and the rest of Jerusalem plus the Sinai and the Golan plateau. The captured territory was three times the size of pre-1967 Israel.

December 1987: The First Palestinian Uprising (Intifada) occurred. Basically a civilian movement, supported by women's organizations, workers and student. It was met with a brutal response by the Israeli military.

Oslo Accords 1993–1996: The Declaration calls for:

- **i.** Israel to withdraw from Jericho and Gaza, and eventually the West Bank.
- **ii.** Five years of limited autonomy for Palestinians in those areas.
- **iii.** Election of Palestinian Legislative Council within nine months.
- **iv.** Establishment of a Palestinian police force.
- **v.** The question of Jerusalem was left undecided.[5]

2000 The Second Palestinian Intifada: It was more violent than the first Intifada and it was during this time that suicide bombers and Hamas, with armed guerilla fighters, emerged. Again it was defeated by the power of the Israeli military whose weapons continue to be supplied



Palestinian Loss of Land 1947 to Present

The four maps above were originally produced by the Palestine Israel Action Group. They state, “PIAG has produced Educational Resources and Tools for Activists that can be used by religious and secular organizations locally, nationally, and internationally. We invite readers to adapt these materials for use in their own communities.”

primarily by the United States (in 2016, Israel received over $10 million a day from the US in military support).[6]

2004 The Separation Wall: Israel considers it a security barrier against terrorism, while Palestinians call it a racial segregation or apartheid wall. At a total length of 708 kilometres (440 mi), 85% of it cuts at times 18 kilometres (11 mi) deep into the West Bank, isolating about 9.4% of it, leaving an estimated 25,000 Palestinians isolated from the bulk of that territory.[7]

In this first of four studies, we must begin with an understanding of what history is and what it is not. For many of us, we were taught that history deals with facts, an exact description of what took place. More recently, history has come to be understood more as a selection and interpretation of facts. In other words, whenever history is recounted it is always told from a particular perspective and from a particular social, political, and/or economic context. “That is why interpretation is critical. The one who interprets assumes power; the one who dominates the story makes it his-story, her-story, literally creating history.”[8]

BALFOUR DECLARATION: Its sixty-eight words read as follows: “His Majesty’s Government view with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other countries.”

ZIONISM: “Zionism is a political ideology; it is the set of beliefs that drove the founding of the state of Israel in Palestine and continues to drive its expansion today. Zionism serves to justify the colonization of Palestine and the dispossession of the Palestinian people through land confiscation, forced exile and massacres.”[13]

Often it is more myth or memory than fact when it is recounted in later contexts, and the Israeli narration of the history of this land is no exception. In defense of their ownership of the land of Palestine, the state of Israel claims that God gave this land to the Jewish people exclusively and in perpetuity; that the Bible is their eternal deed, and that the state of Israel is now merely reclaiming God’s promise.

This narration grew in its intensity particularly at the time of the 1967 war, when extremist settlers began, illegally according to international law, to settle in the West Bank claiming it as ancient Samaria and Judea. The “Judeaization” of the land then began in earnest with settlers building a settlement on every point of land that they claimed had a biblical antecedent.[9] So intense has the rhetoric become that many Jewish settlers would argue that the Palestinians are aliens and should be forcibly driven out in accordance with Numbers 33:50–53. Others, a minority, would even argue they should be annihilated as God commanded in Deuteronomy 20: 16–18.

In writing about the history of Palestine/ Israel, interpretation is critical. There is another narrative and after 50 years of Israeli occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem and suppression of Gaza, it is a story that is beginning to be heard. This story starts with a people who through successive empires—Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Crusaders,

One of the over 500 Israeli Checkpoints.

Ottomans, British, and Israelis—continue to remain on the land cultivating it as did their parents before them and those before them. Writing about how the Palestinian identity changed and developed with each successive empire, Mitri Raheb states:

> They changed their language from Aramaic to Greek to Arabic, while their identity shifted from Canaanite to Hittite, to Hivite, to Perizzite, to Girgashite, to Amorite, to Jebusite, to Philistine, Israelite, Judaic/Samaritan, to Hasmoniac, to Jewish, to Byzantine, to Arab, to Ottoman, and to Palestinian, to mention some. The people changed religion too, from Baal, to Jahwe. Later, many believed in Jesus Christ and became Christian. Forced to pay extra taxes, many joined Islam and became Muslim. And yet they stayed, throughout the centuries, and remained people of the land with a dynamic identity. In this sense the Palestinians today stand in historic continuity with biblical Israel.[10]

The modern chapter of this narrative speaks of a promise made during World War I to the nations of the Middle East, a promise stating that if they supported Britain against the Ottoman Empire, once it was defeated, they would be given the right of self-determination. This narrative condemns the Balfour Declaration, in which Britain, mired in a stalemate with Germany on the western front and dealing with failed efforts to defeat Turkey on the Gallipoli Peninsula, made a promise in a letter dated November 2, 1917 to Baron Rothschild, a prominent British Jewish Zionist. The aim of the British government was to gain international Jewish support, particularly in the United States with the hope that

The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world and those who live in it; for God has founded it on the seas and established it on the rivers.

Psalm 24: 1

this would hasten the entry of the United States into World War I. This letter stated that the British government favoured "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people...."[11] The Palestinians saw this Declaration as a betrayal, but their petitions, protesting the injustice of establishing a Jewish homeland without the consent of the indigenous population, were set aside.[12]

Listening to Palestinian Voices

It was only in the mid-80s, that the Palestinians began to tell their story of suffering in the years following the UN Partition in 1947 and the increasing intensity of that suffering in the present. These voices include theologians and activists such as Mitri Raheb, Nora Carmi, Jean Zaru, and many others.[14] In more recent years, the international community has joined with them listening to the Palestinian voices, taking seriously the story of those from the underside of history. These writers are evangelical and main-line Christian, Jewish, Palestinian Christian, and Muslim as well as others. Jewish voices include those of Ilan Pappe, particularly his book describing Israel's policy of ethnic cleansing[15], Uri Davis who in 1987 declared Israel to be "an apartheid state,"[16] as well as various documentaries, such as Neta Shoshani (Born in Deir Yassin), or the YouTube presentation on the massacre of Deir Yassin[17] (see study questions). These scholars and artists call upon Israel to own a story of the land that has been hidden from its own people and omitted from its educational curricula. To date, Israel has consistently and adamantly refused to engage in peace process initiatives in which the Nakba is "on the table".[18]

With this increased and ever increasing support, Palestinian Christians are even more committed to telling their story of the Nakba and the Israeli occupation and to work for justice and peace, both for themselves as Palestinians and for the Israelis. Their belief is that where injustice exists it impacts the health and humanity of both the oppressed and the oppressor. Having begun this study with the prayer of the 9th Conference of Sabeel, we end with a Litany for Peace and Justice that was used at that conference. It is something that could be used in your study as you stand in solidarity with Palestinian Christians.

he seperation wall and the
rince of Peace

All photos have been provided by the author or The Presbyterian Church in Canada and the Women's Missionary Society. They are from previous participants of study tours to the Middle East.

Litany for Peace and Justice

The work is hard. It is demanding, time consuming, and sometimes tedious. Will we recommit ourselves to working for peace and justice?

We will.

This work can cause tensions and rifts. This work can drive wedges between people. But this work needs us to stick together. Will we dedicate ourselves to doing our best to work together?

We will.

This work for peace and justice is more effective when we embrace and respect diversity. Will we recommit ourselves to embracing and respecting difference?

We will.

This work requires creativity. This work demands that we push ourselves to look for new possibilities. Will we dedicate ourselves to find sources of faith and hope in our lives?

We will.

This work for peace and justice requires faith and hope that a better tomorrow is possible. Will we dedicate ourselves to find sources of faith and hope in our lives?

We will.

This work for peace and justice calls us to find inner peace. Will we recommit ourselves to promoting peace both within and without?

We will.
AMEN[19]

Study questions:

1. Read the suggested biblical passages. How do they help you to think about ownership/sharing of the land both in Palestine and in Canada?

2. Watch the YouTube presentation *Four recollections of the massacre of Deir Yassin on April 9, 1948* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PKLucDqEeKA –. Explore further some of the websites cited in this study. How has your understanding of the history of the land of Palestine been impacted by what you have seen and read?

3. Gather together articles from newspapers and magazines. Read them critically as to how the stories of encounters today between the Israeli army and Palestinians is told. Ask questions and try different reconstructions of the narrative. Where can you hear the minority voice in the stories?

4. Make a list of the questions about the history of the land of Palestine that remain unanswered?

hoto: Aida Refugee Camp in Bethlehem.

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[1] Naim Ateek, Cedar Duaybis, Tina Whitehead, eds., *The Bible and the Palestine Israel Conflict* (Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Centre: Jerusalem, 2014), p. 301. Palestine Liberation Theology (PLT) came into being in 1988, and has been "nourished by a small group of Palestinian Christians who struggled to find a relevant faith in the midst of occupation, dispossession, and oppression. Over the years PLT has reached Palestinian Christians throughout the Holy Land as well as people around the world who together share a vision of justice, peace, and reconciliation under the sovereignty of a loving, inclusive God." p. 19.

[2] Mitri Raheb, *Faith in the Face of Empire* (Maryknoll: Orbis Press, 3rd printing 2014), p. 51

[3] The World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (WCC-EAPPI) was created in 2002 by the World Council of Churches based on a letter and an appeal from local Palestinian church leaders to create an international presence in the country. There is a continuous presence of 25–30 Ecumenical Accompaniers on the ground, serving for three months in accompanying, offering protective presence, and witness to the Palestinian suffering. Since its beginning there are now almost 1800 hundred former Ecumenical Accompaniers (EAs). For more information, see https://eappi.org/en/about

[4] Michael Prior, ed., *Speaking the Truth: Zionism, Israel and Occupation* (Northampton, Mass., Olive Branch Press, 2005), p. 193

[5] www.cnn.com/2013/09/03/world/meast/oslo-accords-fast-facts/index.html

[6] www.ifamericaknew.org/stat/usaid.html#source

[7] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Israeli_West_Bank_barrier

[8] Raheb, *Faith*, p. 21.

[9] Raheb, *Faith*, p. 18.

[10] Raheb, *Faith*, p. 12-13.

[11] www.history.com/thisdayinhistory/the-balfour-declaration.

[12] Michael Prior, *The Bible and Colonialism: A Moral Critique* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), p. 125

[13] Definition is that of the International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network Canada.

[14] Raheb, *Faith*, p. 31 identifies Elias Chacour, Giries Khoury, Munib Younan, Odeh Rantisi, Rafiq Khoury, Riah Abu El-Assal, Jean Zaru, Nur Masalha, and Michel Sabbah, among others.

[15] Ilan Pappe, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2006).

[16] Raheb, *Faith*, p. 33.

[17] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PKLucDqEeKA – Four recollections of the massacre of Deir Yassin on April 9, 1948

[18] Pappe, *Ethnic Cleansing*, p. 244.

[19] Ateek, et al., *The Bible*, p. 302.

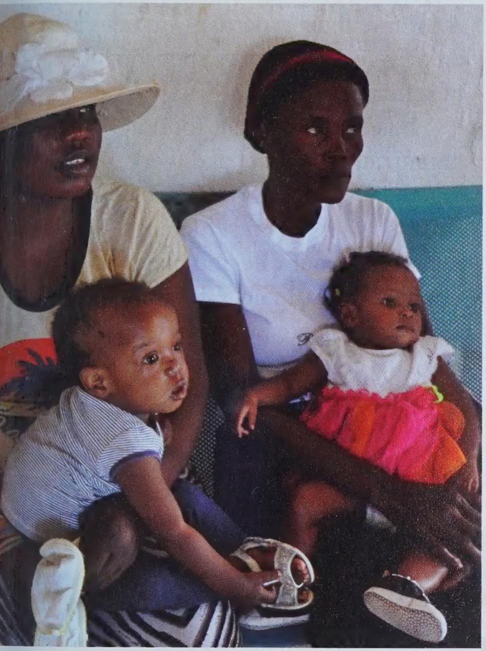
HAITI: Gender-based Violence

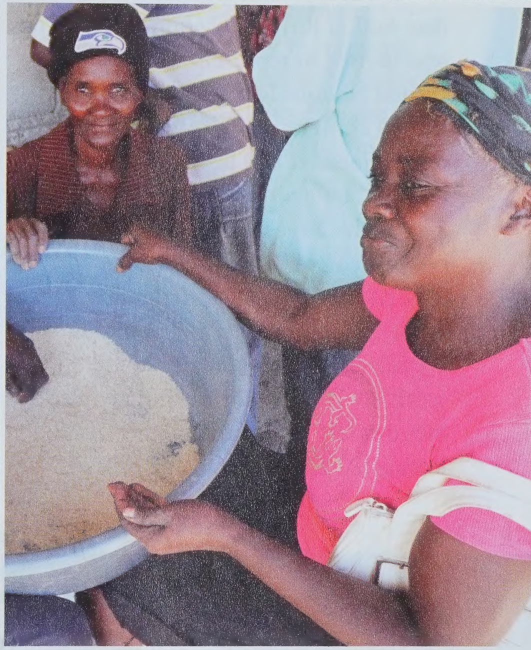
Together We Can!

While women are known as the central pillars of the family and community in Haiti, they are also frequently vulnerable to sexual violence. Lack of resources, gender power imbalances and widespread poverty severely limit prevention, care and treatment for victims of abuse.

Through this Together We Can! project you can support Presbyterian World Service & Development (PWS&D) as they help vulnerable women and girls and put an end to gender-based violence in Haiti.

Together with WMS groups, congregations, and mission-minded people We Can make a difference.





Violence against girls and women is a serious health and human rights issue. With support from the WMS and other Presbyterians, PWS&D will help address the root causes of this injustice, meet the needs of victims and reduce the risk of gender-based violence for the long-term.

This program works in collaboration with local organizations to protect the rights of women and girls and ensures that victims have access to the medical, social, legal and economic services they need to cope and combat the injustice of sexual violence.

Awareness campaigns, advocacy and community education will also help reduce incidents of gender-based violence.

Together We Can! projects are WMS campaigns.

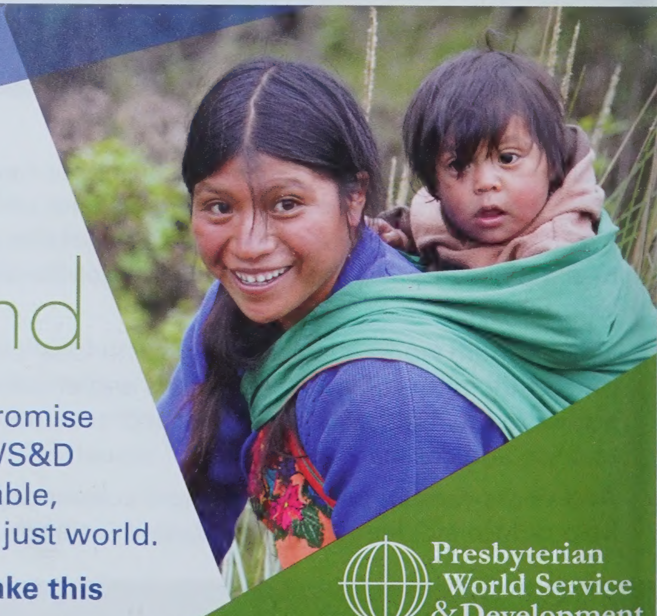
Please send your donation to: Women's Missionary Society
50 Wynford Drive, Toronto, ON M3C 1J7 800-619-7301 skim@presbyterian.ca

Mission In Action

Action Réfugiés Montréal

We are thrilled to share with you that Action Réfugiés Montréal (ARM) was invited to represent Canada at the United Nations Refugee Agency's annual conference on refugee resettlement at UN headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland this past June! This is the largest set of meetings on the yearly UNHCR calendar with partners from international bodies, governments, and community organizations that actually do the work involved in supporting people to move safely to a third country. Action Réfugiés Montréal was one of five Canadian non-profit organizations selected to participate and to showcase their expertise—in our case on private, community sponsorships of refugees.

It is a huge honour for our organization to meet and work together with the world's decision-makers in refugee resettlement. In recognizing our role and place in Canada's resettlement programs, we happily share our knowledge and 20+ years of experience in bringing people forced to flee their home countries to Canada. As the sole organization invited which



We Respond

Inspired by God's promise of abundant life, PWS&D envisions a sustainable, compassionate and just world.

Together we can make this vision a reality.

Please give today.

Presbyterian World Service &Development

50 Wynford Drive, Toronto, ON M3C 1J7
1-800-619-7301 ext. 291, **WeRespond.ca**

specializes in sponsorship in Québec, we are proud to present our work on the global stage. Québec has welcomed a significant number of refugees over the past few years and the Québec model is considered a good example for other countries to follow. To our best knowledge, Action Réfugiés Montréal is the only Sponsorship Umbrella Agreement Holder (Détenteur entente-cadre) in Québec that has participated in this international conference. It is with much appreciation of the people we work with and due to the efforts of our excellent staff, volunteers, and supporters that we are able to offer world-class services and be consulted now internationally.

Our Sponsorship Coordinator, Cathy Nguyen, attended the multi-day conference and was particularly active in the workshops on Complementary Pathways to Refugee Resettlement (including labour and family reunification programs); discussions between Emerging and Traditional Resettlement States and NGOs; and Community Refugee Sponsorship Programs, which highlighted key elements of the Canadian model.

Action Réfugiés Montréal's mission is to seek and promote compassion and justice to refugees. We normally do this in the Montreal area. Now extending our mission internationally, our contributions to this refugee resettlement consultation are helping more government decision-makers and community organizations establish best practices and are leading to more refugees being resettled to a safe place to live.

In addition to our discussions aiding other countries establish refugee sponsorship programs, another result of the global collaboration for this multi-day meeting includes a statement signed by participating Non-Governmental Organizations,which was submitted to the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) as part of the conference's official documentation.

Action Réfugiés Montréal: extending the scope of Compassion and Justice for Refugees as far as we can.

News

Maria Isabelle Agar, beloved wife of the late Reverend Gordon Agar of Calgary, AB, passed away at the Chartwell Eau Claire Care Residence on Tuesday, September 19, 2017 at the age of 96 years. Isabelle, and her husband Gordon served in India with The Board of World Mission (PCC) from 1946–1953.

In the Society

Local

Rev. Deb Rapport presented on the ARISE ministry at the September meeting of **Paris** WMS auxiliary. ARISE stands for Advocacy and Reclaiming those Involved in the Sex-trade through Empowerment.

Along with auxiliaries in the Presbyterial, and members of North Pelham/Rockway who also attended, we contributed 68 personal care outreach bags to ARISE. Karen Wassacase, Paris Presbyterial President, led a prayer for Rev. Deb, her team, the members who sew and fill personal care bags, and for the people who will receive them. Karen also presented Rev. Deb with a swatch of sweet grass to remind her of the Spirit's care for this outreach ministry.

Today I drove an hour to church in the country. The small country church, Willis Presbyterian Church in Jarrett (near Orillia), was brimming with warm hospitality, everyone knowing everyone. The stain-glass windows were beaming and the front door was left open during the service. The Fellowship Room had an assortment of homemade goodies for the fellowship time.

The member of the **Willis Jarret** WMS led the Thank Offering Service. Mary Helen Garvin gave an excellent message on Food, Faith, and Mission. In May, Mary Helen attended a conference on this theme at Presbyterian College in Montreal. Many will remember Mary from her time serving in Taiwan. She is an excellent speaker and I strongly recommend her to other groups. Mary Helen gave everyone a lot to think about and handouts were available in the Fellowship room.

It truly felt like the congregation was one big family. Everyone made a point of greeting each other, some would say 'only in the country.'

~Mary Veale-Parker

St. Andrew's WMS in Kitchener will miss the presence of Mary Johnston, who passed away in July. She was actively involved at the WMS at the Presbyterial level, but might be best known for promoting and selling Bridgehead and Fair Trade products at local WMS event. She will also be remembered for her tremendous energy, her selfless and generous support of others, and her outstanding leadership role in education.

Remembering

Ruth McCombie
Knox WMS, Burgoyne ON

Dawn Marie Flint
St. Giles, Calgary AB

Irene Martin
Presbyterian Women,
Varsity Acres, Calgary AB

Marlene Kirkby
Bessie McMurchy WMS
Knox, Listowel ON

Dale Cousins
Friendship Auxiliary
St. Marys Presbyterian
St. Marys ON

Margaret Moore
St. Andrew's Presbyterian
Women, St. Andrew's
Church, Sarnia ON

Donna Williams
MacLennan Auxilary
WMS, Knox Church,
Tiverton ON

In Memoriam

Jean Thompson-Macdonald passed away on August 4, 2017, after a long illness. She was a long-term member Montreal Presbyterial, where she served as the Recording Secretary. She also served on WMS Council.

Jean previously attended Robert Campbell Memorial Church, Montreal, and also served on the board. She also worked with children with disabilities.

She leaves to mourn her husband Bob, sisters, Barbara and Laurie, children Scott, Cathy (Mark), Heather (Rick), Nancy (Luc), Karen (Glenn), Debbie (George), Carol (Peter), Laurie-Lynn. Jean was a devoted grandmother to 18 grandchildren. She will also be missed by many friends and family.

During her time with the WMS, Jean had the opportunity to visit India, Taiwan, and Malawi. Her personal travels also included Ireland, Greece, and England.

Give the gift that makes a difference. ***Together*** with other WMS groups, congregations, and mission-minded people ***We Can*** help.

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Kenora Fellowship Centre (Anamiewigummig Centre)

The Kenora Fellowship Centre provides a place of safety and a sacred space for healing and wellness. It serves a population who has been directly impacted by the effects of the Residential school system. These effects are manifested in poverty, addiction and often homelessness.

Through this Together We Can! project you can help house appoximately 16 people and offer basic essential services such as food, shelter, showers, clothing, laundry, and transportation.

Please send your donation to:
Women's Missionary Society,
50 Wynford Dr, Toronto, ON
M3C 1J7   800-619-7301
wmsfinance@presbyterian.ca

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